

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private company that runs other children's homes in the surrounding areas. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children, of either sex, who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home has a predominantly good Ofsted inspection history. At the time of this inspection, it was back on a good track, after a period of disruption following a change in the composition of the group. Placements, at that time, were reviewed for continuing appropriateness and, in one instance, an alternative placement sought. Any concerns about the home's practice during this period have been resolved. Systems have been introduced and external management strengthened to prevent the likelihood of such disruption re-occurring.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements, young people generally make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. They are helped to achieve this by the good support they receive from staff. Placement planning is very individualised to meet the personal needs of each young person and is implemented in practice.

Staff have a good understanding of safe working practices which they effectively follow in conjunction with external professionals when necessary. Young people strongly agree that they feel safe at the home. Staff follow identified strategies to protect young people from areas of risk. Any concerns or concerning behaviours are well-managed by staff, again in conjunction with external professionals and services when necessary. Appropriate boundaries and rules are set and are consistently followed.

Leadership and management arrangements are good. Together, the Registered Manager and the person who visits on behalf of the Responsible Individual,

effectively identify and address any weaknesses to secure future improvement.

Young people strongly agreed with a number of positive statements about the home and described the care and support as very good. They made the following comments about improvements they would like to see, 'Let us decide who comes and lives here' and 'Let me have my privacy'. The service has already taken action to effectively address the former concern, and the latter is the subject of the recommendation reported.

Two placing social workers and a parent gave overwhelmingly positive responses in a questionnaire they had recently completed for the home, focusing on key areas such as safeguarding, health and education. One made the following comment: 'Overall, it was a very good placement where the young person began to settle and enjoy themselves. Support from staff was good, especially when interacting with the young person.'

Independent statutory reviews of the care plan for each young person at the home found that they were making good progress towards achieving agreed placement objectives.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- appropriately protect each child's privacy and confidentiality needs. (NMS 3.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements, young people have achieved good outcomes. For example, both young people in placement are making good progress towards achieving their primary placement objective, such as, 'to remain accommodated until relations between them and their family have significantly improved.'

Young people make good progress in developing a positive identity, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of their background. They make and usually sustain positive relationships with other young people and staff in the home and, where needed, re-develop positive relationships with their family. Young people's emotional and behavioural development and identity needs are positively addressed in individual key work sessions linked to their individual placement plans. Although staff encourage young people to talk to them about their background, as part of getting to

know them and their sense of identity, they also respect young people's choice not to talk to them about this.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are very well met. They are helped to understand their health needs and to take responsibility for them. Young people's health needs are positively addressed in their individual placement plans and regularly reviewed. Any health risk-taking behaviour by young people, such as smoking, is decreasing. For example, by attending smoking cessation appointments.

Young people are able to actively express their views, wishes and feelings, and they know that they are taken into account both in the day-to-day running of the home and in important decisions about their lives. Young people participate in regular key worker sessions in important meetings about their lives, and have re-started participating in young people's meetings.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of placement, young people's educational attendance and achievement is good. For example, having not attended any education for a very long time, some now attend the provider's independent college, and work has been done to improve their attendance there. Others who have finished compulsory full-time education, have done so well at work experience that it has paved the way into further education opportunities.

Young people are actively and positively involved in activities in the community. Young people strongly agree that staff help them to be involved in out of school activities that they are interested in, such as, singing lessons, and a climbing club. Young people receive care, appropriate to their age and understanding, to help them prepare for and support them into adulthood. For example, developing their cooking skills, prepares them for participation in the provider's independence training programme.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **good**.

Staff are consistently concerned with and actively promote young people's welfare. Young people described the care and support as very good.

Staff use individualised positive behaviour management strategies to help young people enjoy good relationships with them, other adults and other young people. As a result this has impacted positively on the relationships that some young people have with their family during contact visits and holidays with them.

The home operates an effective reward scheme with young people to encourage, for example, participation in education or completion of independence tasks. Good behaviour is rewarded and unacceptable behaviour is fairly sanctioned, which is recorded in positive and negative consequence logs. However, the privacy of young people is not sufficiently respected when staff tidy their bedrooms. This can

adversely affect the positive relationships that usually exist between staff and young people.

The running of the home and the delivery of young people's care is significantly influenced by young people's views, which they share during individual key working sessions, meetings regarding their care and young people's meetings. When young people or their parents raise concerns or complaints they are taken seriously, appropriately investigated and any lessons learnt acted upon.

Staff, consistently and centrally, involve young people in the planning and review of their care. This ensures it is tailored to their individual needs and is focused on clear outcomes. Each young person has an up-to-date placement plan which they have signed up to. It includes the reason for their placement, their long term plan and details the arrangements for health, contact and behaviour management.

Staff actively promote young people's educational attendance and achievement. When they encounter barriers to this, such as young people not attending school full-time, they provide home schooling and work proactively with relevant education professionals to try and overcome these barriers.

Staff also work proactively with health and safeguarding professionals and the police to try and secure positive outcomes for young people and to address any significant events relating to their protection. For example, the Registered Manager met with the local police constable to reach an agreement regarding the reporting of young people missing from the home and police involvement in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **good** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Both young people strongly agreed that they feel safe at the home. To help protect them, each young person's placement plan includes a comprehensive risk assessment and behaviour management plan that is implemented in practice and regularly reviewed.

Since the last inspection, one young person has been missing numerous times. On these occasions they were protected as far as possible. The home managed these instances in line with the protocols and procedures maintained by the local police and subsequently reviewed the on-going suitability of the placement. There are no recent incidents of young people going missing.

Physical restraint has been used five times since the last inspection. It has been used and recorded appropriately. Both young people commented that they understood why staff use it. Sanctions have also been used and recorded appropriately, to try and effectively address unacceptable behaviour.

Staff have strong and proactive relationships with the local police and local safeguarding professionals to support and promote young people's safety. These

relationships have been key to effectively resolving any concerns from significant events relating to the protection of young people since the last inspection. For example, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) for child protection was notified when a young person made an allegation against a member of staff. This allegation was handled and resolved to the LADO's satisfaction.

To help prevent unsuitable people from having the opportunity to harm young people, the provider's staff recruitment procedures meet requirements. When the home's staffing was not sufficient to safely look after one young person, agency staff were employed. The Registered Manager has confirmation from the agency that they have all the information required on agency staff who have worked at the home.

The home provides a good physical environment for the young people. Environmental checks required are up-to-date. The environment is one of the areas monitored during monthly registered provider visits.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

This is a well-managed home. It has a clear, up-to-date Statement of Purpose which includes all required matters. The aim and purpose of the home and the facilities and services it provides are clear to staff, placing social workers and young people's parents. There is also a comprehensive young person's guide to the home.

Staff numbers, experience and support are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The details of the staff team, their relevant qualifications and experience and their induction, supervision and training arrangements are included in the home's Statement of Purpose. The provider is in the process of recruiting to current staff vacancies, through which they hope to achieve a mixed gender staff group. In the meantime, staff are working extra hours to provide the young people with continuity of staffing.

Since the last inspection, staff have participated in training to be able to continue to meet young people's needs, for example, in terms of their health and safeguarding. Nearly all staff have attained a professional qualification at level three that is relevant to their role. Regular supervision and staff team meetings also support staff to provide a good quality service to the young people.

The home's Registered Manager and senior residential care worker, between them, have the skills, experience and qualifications to exercise effective leadership of staff and the operation of the home. They ensure the delivery of good quality care that meets the individual needs of each young person at the home.

To secure future improvement, the home has acted on the one recommendation from its last inspection. The wishes and feelings of young people and others who are significant to them are now taken into account during quality assurance monitoring processes.

Regular monitoring of the operation of the home effectively contributes to maintaining good quality care and promotes the welfare of the young people. Each month the Registered Manager reports on the matters they are required to monitor, and every six months they review the quality of care and report on this to Ofsted. In addition, the registered provider visitor carries out monthly visits to the home. These visits focus on key areas such as safeguarding children and young people, their participation and outcomes, and include discussions with both young people and staff.

About this inspection

The purpose of this inspection is to assure children and young people, parents, the public, local authorities and government of the quality and standard of the service provided. The inspection was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.