

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Carole Moore
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and the organisation operates other children's homes in the area.

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 effectiveness with which the home provides care and promotes positive outcomes for young people is good. Young people benefit from high levels of support and supervision afforded to them and by having a staff team that has their best interests at the heart of what they do. Feedback from other professionals state that staff are very committed and take a real interest in promoting young people's well-being. 'They are an attentive supportive staff team, competent and professional.'

The staff work really hard to keep the young people safe. There have been many challenging issues but the committed staff team has the knowledge and the ability to initiate safe working practices.

Leadership and management are both well-respected and there is comprehensive and rigorous monitoring of all records which informs reports and the detailed development plan. This helps ensure that good standards of care are maintained. The staff team are ambitious and strive for continuous improvement.

As a result of this visit one shortfall has been identified. The young person's guide does not contain the independent reviewing officer's telephone number.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the children's guide contains the contact details of the independent reviewing officer. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are welcomed into the home and encouraged to make a positive start towards achieving the agreed aims of their placement and anticipated outcomes. Staff work to build familiar daily routines that match each young person's needs and circumstances. Young people enjoy living at the home and they make positive relationships with staff. A social worker said, 'The young person responds really well to his key workers.' As a result young people make good progress in most areas of their development.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They plan activities, menus and influence the design and decoration of the home. Young people know how to complain. They feel listened to because key workers and staff make time to talk about their interests and concerns on a daily basis.

Young people are new to this placement and schools have now been identified. Young people are due to start a phased entry back into school within the next week. Young people have had the opportunity to continue with their learning by visits from a tutor and from staff using educational tools to ensure they enjoy learning and are getting ready to go back into mainstream school.

Young people have a number of hobbies and interests that they are supported to pursue by staff. They enjoy swimming, football, using a trike, skating, going to the cinema and playing on the X-box. Staff encourage them to use community based facilities such as the swimming pool and library.

Young people are enjoying good health and benefit from good nutritious meals and plenty of physical exercise, thus learning what contributes to a healthy life style. They visit their doctor, dentist and optician so that no health matters are going unchecked. Young people attend weekly appointments with the in house psychotherapist so that they get the help and support that they rightly need. This means that they are developing the skills to solve problems and cope when something goes wrong. One young person commented, 'I like the therapist because he helps me with my muddles.'

Young people benefit from family contact that is well supported. In all cases contact is carefully considered so that contact is always in the best interest of the young person. Young people get emotional support so that contact is positive with their family. This helps young people to maintain cultural ties and family contact.

Young people are encouraged to take some responsibility for looking after their room and being responsible for their laundry. However they are not yet old enough to take on independence skills building.

Quality of care

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

The staff provide a very nurturing environment for the young people living in the home and have really high aspirations for the young people living there. They develop and maintain extremely positive and constructive relationships with them. The staff know the young people very well and constantly assess their progress through a variety of means, such as daily handovers, supervision and one-to-one sessions. This detailed knowledge of the young people ensures they receive very good individual support and guidance. When young people experience differing emotions and unpredictable behaviour, staff are there to support them. As a result, young people begin to develop positive social behaviours.

Care planning is well organised and well documented. The home's placement plans are easy to understand, they come from a child-centred approach and they record needs and the actions that staff take to minimise risks. Staff support young people's health, social and emotional growth. Staff are warm, engaging and responsive to young people's needs. This allows young people to make emotional connections with staff. Staff invest time and attention so that they can directly influence young people's behaviour. Young people are encouraged to meet their own targets and incentives are used to achieve this aim.

Young people are confident with sharing their views. They use their time with their keyworker to voice any areas of unhappiness. This ensures that the voice of young people remains at the heart of the work of the home.

Young people routinely enjoy a good range of activities, and again dedicated staff time enables them to access some good opportunities such as going to the cinema, going swimming and skating. Young people's cultural background and personal identity are positively addressed in both daily living and care planning and their rights are respected and promoted.

The manager pays particular attention to planning and coordinating young people's support to ensure that positive progress is achieved. Risks are assessed regularly and reflected in written information that staff use to guide the way they work each day. Consequently, staff are able to adapt and change the way they work quickly to ensure risks are managed effectively. The home is excellent at tailoring the service to ensure it carefully meets individual needs.

Staff work closely with the in house psychotherapist so that young people's emotional development is supported. This is an area of expertise and all staff are trained and supported in the therapeutic model used by the psychotherapist. A

thorough assessment of the young person's emotional needs is carried out and provided to the placing authority and clear measurement of outcomes in relation to emotional health is undertaken.

Finding an appropriate school has been a challenge. The staff team have built exceptionally effective partnerships with external agencies and their continual effective hard work has eventually secured a place in a mainstream special school. Staff have also secured a tutor to fill in the educational gap and have also completed daily learning tasks with the young person to enable them to develop a positive outlook towards their education and feelings of achievement.

Young people enjoy living at the home. The home is comfortable and has a homely atmosphere. There has been a complete refurbishment of the home and the quality of the furnishing and decoration at the home is good.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe at this children's home, and their attitude towards staff indicate that they feel safe and secure. Young people are well protected from bullying, accidents, going missing, or other forms of harm because the staffing ratios are appropriate, and thorough risk assessments identify clear ways of preventing potential incidents which may put young people at risk.

Young people are supported at all times to understand their own and other's wellbeing, behaviour and emotions. Staff are skilled at managing the environment and individual's safety and behaviours discretely. They use a wide range of tools to support young people to develop their communication, self-esteem, confidence and social skills.

Staff demonstrate a very good knowledge of safeguarding procedures and are very clear that the safety of young people is their paramount consideration, showing due regard to the particular vulnerabilities of the young people they support. They have ready access to written procedures and take part in relevant and regular safeguarding training. Regular monitoring further protects young people, as staff practice is regularly overseen by the manager or the head of care.

Young people benefit from the home being physically safe and secure. The environment is maintained well and regular safety checks ensure that equipment and utilities work safely. Fire prevention equipment is in place and serviced according to professional guidance. Internal fire drills and fire equipment checks are regularly undertaken to ensure everyone can respond appropriately in an emergency.

Young people's safety is further promoted by a range of effective measures. These include the appropriate vetting of staff and the implementation of effective and consistent behaviour management strategies, which recognise young people's particular vulnerabilities and difficulties. Young people understand the rules of the

home and they feel that the staff are very fair and reasonable when it comes to helping them with their behaviour. There have been some appropriate consequences and physical intervention has been used on a number of occasions, all of which have been appropriate and as a last resort. Such incidents are well recorded in the required format, with good managerial oversight.

Leadership and management

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

The home has recently reopened following a period of refurbishment and there is an experienced acting manager in place covering maternity leave for the Registered Manager. The staff team and management team work well together to ensure the appropriate management of the service and to consider how the home will develop.

The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose, which has been recently reviewed to include the new staff. This gives an accurate picture of the services which the home provides, so that anyone who reads it knows what to expect. The children's guide is developed for each individual young person and gives a clear picture of what to expect. Although the guide is good in that respect, it does not include information such as how to contact the independent reviewing officer.

Staff are provided with practical support and guidance, which helps them structure the daily routines and activities for young people. Staffing levels are sufficient, providing young people with at least one-to-one support throughout the day, evenings and weekends.

The staff are managed in a way that encourages regular reflection of their work, which in turn helps identify ways of improving the service. The staff attend regular staff meetings and receive one-to-one supervision and appraisals. There is also regular meetings with the psychotherapist to further reflect on the therapeutic input and how this is meeting individual young people's needs. There is a positive commitment to professional development, with staff regularly updating their core training to refresh their knowledge and understanding. This ensures they possess the competences and skills to meet young people's diverse needs.

The home's quality assurance programme is good. Monitoring, both internal and external, is rigorous and effective in driving improvements. The manager undertakes the quality assurance and these have provided a good analysis of the current systems and are fed into the six monthly report to Ofsted. This is indicative of a service which wants to continually assess, develop and improve its practice so that young people have better outcomes.

Records are kept up-to-date, stored securely and fully reflect the events, circumstances and progress of each young person. Established procedures are also in place to share information about significant events with the appropriate agencies including Ofsted when they occur.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.