

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elizabeth Barrett
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is operated by a private provider and is registered to provide care and support to six children of the same sex with emotional behavioural difficulties and learning 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**.

Young people experience a good level of care in this home and are making outstanding progress in relation to their individual high profile needs. For some young people significant progress is made across all areas of their placement objectives. The management and staff team strongly promote positive outcomes and achievements particularly in relation to education, staying safe, building appropriate attachments, and working towards independence. This has led to young people attending and achieving at school, and securing college and work experience placements.

Young people are continuously supported to behave well and stay safe. Where young people's behaviour becomes risky to themselves or others, staff sensitively intervene to ensure everyone is safe. The home's management team are working proficiently with other agencies and professionals to ensure safeguarding concerns are promptly addressed. Partnership working has a high profile in this service. This approach promotes and maintains strong integrated practice that is committed to ensuring young people's social, emotional, learning and welfare needs are rigorously met.

The experienced and motivated Registered Manager effectively and efficiently manages the operation of the home. This has involved maintaining a good quality of care to young people through transitional periods, such as changes within the staff team and organisational practices. There is a positive friendly atmosphere in the home, where care practice supports the personal and diverse needs of young people. Staff focus on building strong relationships that are nurturing, open, and honest. Individual therapy sessions provide comprehensive support to address complex and

psychological needs.

The manager and staff team establish good communications with placing social workers and other stakeholders ensuring effective partnerships are established and maintained. Parents and social workers are very positive about the standards of care provided by this home. There are identified areas for improvement made at this visit. These relate to young people's local authority placement plans, effective use of sanctions, the monitoring and evaluation of the home's record keeping, and checks made to staff references. One requirement and three recommendations are set at this visit.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
28 (2001)	maintain within the home a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placing authority, and of the placement plan. (Regulation 28 (1)(a))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home regularly reviews incidents of challenging behaviour, examines trends or issues emerging from this, particularly in relation to individual behaviour management and disciplinary strategies, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice (NMS 3.21)
- maintain within the home as part of the staff recruitment and selection process, checks made to references to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities. Telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references (NMS 16.1)
- ensure the manager regularly monitors in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the homes policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Particularly in relation to ensuring all records are appropriately and accurately made by staff, with immediate action taken to address any issues. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make substantial progress in achieving positive outcomes in this home. Young people thrive, learn, and develop due to clear behaviour management, therapy and a strong commitment to education. Young people's educational achievement is exceptional in relation to their individual starting points. All young people attain qualifications and accreditations in line with their academic and learning abilities. Young people have personal aspirations for their transitions to adulthood, and they achieve significant progress in relation to their overall independence through securing college placements and work experience opportunities.

Progress for young people in relation to their emotional and psychological well-being is excellent. Young people, who have experienced significant early life trauma and disruption, and present complex and high-risk behaviours, learn to explore their feelings and associative concerns. They achieve very good progress in their individual therapy sessions which focus on individual risk profiles, personal histories and identity, and developing appropriate attachments. This enables young people to self-regulate challenging behaviours, and improve their self-esteem and emotional resilience. Comments received from young people include 'the therapy has helped me to sleep better at night, and to manage my feelings and thoughts, without acting on them.'

Some young people express initial difficulty with the very clear and structured routines in the home. However over time, they acknowledge that close staff supervision, activities, and firm expectations significantly influence their individual progress. Young people value how they are developing better ways to stay safe and improve their attachments with others. They are secure in their relationships with adults who care for them because the expectations are clear, realistic, and based upon individual and specific needs. Young people benefit from the structure that exists within this home, and say that this enables them to stabilise and explore their behavioural and emotional needs.

Young people are making significant progress with their educational attendance, attainment, and development. Staff place great importance on young people achieving educationally, and are proactive and consistent in supporting their individual placements. Young people enjoy consistently improved health because they are encouraged to understand and be proactive in managing their own health care and personal needs. Examples are, arranging, and attending all health appointments and check-ups.

Young people have developed awareness about healthy eating and exercise. Staff actively promote physical activities with young people including gym attendance, football, and fishing. Young people are effectively supported in developing their independent life skills such as laundry, budgeting, shopping, cooking, and general household tasks. As a result, they recognise the importance of building on their skills to prepare themselves for a successful transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive a good quality of care in this home. They benefit from a motivated staff team who genuinely care about them. Young people are consistently cared for because there are effective frameworks in place that provide safe care, behaviour management, education and one-to-one therapy. It is through this robust partnership approach that young people have experienced improved outcomes across all areas of their placement objectives.

The Registered Manager and staff group share stable and constructive relationships with the young people. They show positive commitment and concern for young people's welfare and as a result good relationships develop and strengthen. This is clearly demonstrated by staff that provide continuous and consistent care during times of changes within the staff team and in organisational practice. Staff remain non-judgemental and person centred, enabling young people to learn from their experiences. This trusting relationship enables young people to mature and develop better ways of managing their emotions, and behaviours.

Good placement planning and assessment identifies young people's individual needs. Personalised care-planning focuses on safeguarding young people, while giving them meaningful opportunities to explore their individual behavioural needs. The provision of individual therapeutic interventions and preparation for independence further improve young people's opportunities for a preferred future. Young people's contribution to the planning process is valued and their input encouraged. Considerable progress for some young people includes more meaningful participation in their reviews and placement meetings. However, not all young people have local authority placement plans in place.

Young people regularly contribute their wishes and views on the care they receive and the daily practices in the home. Regular monthly meetings take place with young people and staff in addition to individual key working sessions. Records of these sessions are routinely made however, the current framework for recording these sessions does not allow for flexibility of discussion or approach. The service provider is aware of this and is currently looking at how the framework can be developed.

Staff provide an environment where young people can express themselves and develop an awareness and tolerance of each other's needs and identity. Young people say that staff are always there for them when they need them and that they can talk to them about any concerns. The service has a complaints procedure which is known and understood by staff and young people. Young people say that they are confident that any complaint they may raise will receive full attention from staff. Comments from young people include, 'I like the staff and can talk to them about any issues or concerns, and it is a good home to live in.'

The home works very positively and proactively with young people's families further enhancing the quality of care young people receive. Parents comment positively on

the quality of care provided by the home, and the progress young people are making in relation to their contact with family members. The effective liaison with young people's social workers and other agencies ensure all services meet specific and individual needs. The home provides a healthy environment for young people with access to services that meet their emotional, physical, and psychological health. Excellent relationships with the provider's therapists and other health professionals, support young people's health and well-being.

Life skills development is a significant part of young people's day-to-day care with individual plans reflecting placement objectives. Young people are supported to undertake new and socially inclusive activities in line with their risk assessments and safeguarding needs. Staff offer advice and support that encourages young people to lead an active and healthy life and to take regular exercise. Young people live in a well-maintained environment, with improvements to the physical appearance of the home including young people's artwork on display, and pictures on the walls outside young people's bedroom areas.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people has an extremely high profile in this home and staff see this as an essential part of their day-to-day care. There are procedures to ensure that young people's safety and welfare is effectively managed. Staff are vigilant about following these procedures. They also attend training on a range of safeguarding and child protection issues, further protecting young people's safety. For example, staff are provided with training on working with young people with sexualised behaviours. Staff are alert to young people's vulnerabilities and closely monitor their welfare, with any concerns shared with one of the experienced and suitably trained senior managers.

Young people are safe in this home. They say they feel safe and that staff protect them from harm. Good quality individual risk assessments recognise vulnerabilities and complex needs, with robust planning and strategies in place to address identified concerns. Collaborative working between agencies including the local authority, the service's therapist and the youth offending service, comprehensively protect those young people with high profile needs. For example, staff provide high levels of supervision to ensure that young people are kept safe while affording them a level of independence to meet their specific needs.

Procedures and practices relating to young people going missing are well organised and robust. Staff follow local police protocols for reporting and recording these incidents. When missing from care is an issue, staff go to great lengths to locate young people and to protect their safety and the safety of others in the community. Staff provide strong responses to, and promote the safeguarding of young people in line with their personal placement objectives. They maintain consistent dialogue with

key individuals to ensure behaviour management is current, while reviewing and evaluating the effectiveness of risk management interventions.

The home implements a behaviour policy and model of practice founded on promoting and supporting positive relationships between staff and young people. There is effective use of methods of de-escalation, boundaries, and expectations. Young people confirm that there are sometimes difficulties with their peers in the home, with staff managing these situations appropriately to ensure bullying does not become an issue.

Physical interventions are used only when necessary and to ensure the safety of young people and others. Records of restraint since the last inspection demonstrate that they are made in line with regulatory requirements, with reductions in episodes of intervention for all young people in the home. Sanctions are rarely used and young people say that when they do receive a sanction they are mostly fair. However, the evaluation of such measures and in any individual trends and issues emerging, are not sufficiently detailed.

Risk assessments, policies, and procedures support the maintenance of a safe environment. Where issues are identified, these are attended to promptly. Shortfalls in some medication records are identified by the Registered Manager, with further training in the administration and recording of medication scheduled. All fire and safety requirements are regularly checked and up to date. Sufficient competent staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. All staff working with young people are carefully selected and vetted before commencing employment, however checks made to staff recruitment files show that telephone verification of references are not routinely carried out by the provider.

Leadership and management

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

This home benefits from leadership and management arrangements that are strong and efficient. The Registered Manager is accomplished and professional; ensuring the quality of care provided in the home consistently meets the complex needs of young people. Since the last inspection there have been changes within the staff team and the organisation. A period of unsettlement resulting from these changes affected the morale of some staff within the home. The manager has worked tirelessly during this time of transition to ensure consistency of care and support and to limit any impact on young people. Young people and stakeholders confirm that young people have not been affected by these recent events.

Consistent and regular supervision provide staff with good opportunities to discuss their role and professional development. The manager effectively monitors and addresses any identified shortfall in staff performance as part of their on-going development. Staff say that they feel supported and access core training as part of their learning needs. Good quality mandatory and professional training arrangements are in place, including training in attachment, managing behaviour, risk assessment

and a recently launched e-training programme.

The stable management team communicate high expectations and provide consistent support and guidance to staff. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities to promote and secure improved outcomes for young people. Staff and other professionals speak highly of the manager's commitment and his drive to improve the lives of young people. As a result of this positive management, young people have continued to receive an improved level of care, and achieve outstanding outcomes. One social worker commented, 'I have a very good working relationship with the home's manager, with excellent communication in place.'

The home's manager carries out regular checks on key areas of the service's day-to-day practice and operation. In addition, the manager receives information in monthly monitoring reports that are produced following a visit from an organisational representative. The home's development plan highlights identified areas of improvement including feedback from young people, staff, and stakeholders. The manager and operations manager for the service have identified key areas for development in coming months, following discrepancies highlighted in quality assurance and monitoring processes. Examples of areas for development are the home's placement plan and facilitating a young person's forum.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose which informs young people, their families, and placing authorities about the services provided by the home, which accurately reflects the practice and registration conditions. The Registered Manager makes appropriate notifications to the relevant bodies as required ensuring important information is shared with the right professionals about young people's welfare and safety.

The home's manager clearly demonstrates the impact and value that living in the home has had on some young people's lives and how their life chances have improved over time. Records are maintained confidentially, stored correctly and contribute to the understanding of the young person's life.

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.