

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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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 accommodation for up to six children of the same sex with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is part of a service providing specialist care for young people with complex needs.

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 last interim inspection of the home, in February 2013, judged it to be making satisfactory progress since its previous full inspection judged its overall effectiveness to be good. Since February 2013, the home has received numerous compliments, from independent reviewing officers, the local safeguarding children board (LSCB) and local police, and from young people's parents, placing social workers and young people themselves. For example, a reviewing officer commented: 'Staff clearly care about the young person's welfare and development and are flexible, imaginative and innovative in providing a package of care tailored to meet that young person's very special needs.' Parents, staff, an external professional and young people themselves also gave overwhelmingly positive feedback since the last inspection in response to the Ofsted surveys about what they think about the home.

In relation to their starting points at the time of their placements, overall young people make good progress with their welfare and development. They are helped to achieve this by the outstanding support and guidance they receive from staff. However, on occasions young people choose not to follow this guidance and adversely affect their positive outcomes by continuing to engage in risk taking behaviours that place them at risk of harm or re-offending. Young people have shown a reduction in incidents of such behaviour over their time in the placement. Care planning and practice are of exceptional high quality and are highly individualised to meet the personal needs of each young person. Safeguarding practice, in partnership with other professionals, is excellent. Despite this, however, it has not always been able to prevent young people from continuing to engage in

damaging, risk taking behaviours. The leadership and management arrangements are good. Together with their deputy manager and senior and lead officers, and the registered provider visitor, the Registered Manager identifies and addresses any weaknesses to secure future improvement. The home has acted upon the one requirement and recommendation from the previous inspection.

One area for improvement has been identified from this inspection. It relates to the Registered Manager's review of the quality of care and ensuring that this provides proper oversight.

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
34 (2001)	ensure the Registered Manager establishes and maintains a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals and supplies to Ofsted a report in respect of any such review conducted by them. (Regulation 34 (1)-(2))	20/03/2014

Recommendations

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

- complete reports monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at six monthly intervals, to enable the provider to identify any trends and issues of concern over this period and to improve the quality of care being provided. A copy of these overarching reports should be sent to Ofsted. (Volume 5 statutory guidance 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of their placements, and the length of time they have been in placement, overall young people achieve good outcomes. This is evident from the reviews of young people's placements: both from their statutory Looked After Child (LAC) review meetings and their internal placement plan monitoring meetings which are held every two months in addition to their LAC reviews. Both reviews focus on the Every Child Matters outcomes for young people and their progress in relation to them. The report of a young person's recent LAC

review included: 'The review heard that there have been many things that have gone well.' These included their family contact, completion of work ordered by the court and progression towards leaving care.

Overall, young people make good progress in developing a positive identity, self-esteem and knowledge and understanding of their background. They are helped to develop this by the individual therapy the service provides for them. Young people's therapists attend reviews of their placements and provide reports, for example reporting on their self-confidence/worth. Young people quickly make and usually sustain positive relationships with staff in the home. However the extent of some young people's emotional and behavioural difficulties can make engaging positively with staff and professionals problematic for them at times. Young people also make a lot of progress with family and social relationships.

Young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are very well met. Young people's parents strongly agreed that staff make sure their health needs are met. Young people are helped to understand their health needs, particularly through their therapy sessions, and begin to take responsibility for them. Young people's health needs are detailed in their individual placement plans and these are regularly reviewed.

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 and therapy sessions, in important meetings reviewing their placements, and in monthly community meetings. The first 2014 community meeting was due to take place the evening after this inspection, when 'TVs in bedrooms' was one of the issues young people wanted to discuss.

Taking into account their starting points at the time of placement, young people's educational attendance and achievement is good overall. Given their age, most of the young people no longer receive compulsory full time education and instead are successfully supported to participate in further education, learning or employment. Young people described that staff make sure they go to school or college and help them with their school or college work either all or most of the time.

Young people are actively and positively involved in activities in the home and the community. They described how staff help them to be involved in out-of-school activities that they are interested in.

Young people receive care and support to help them prepare for leaving the home and moving to independence and adulthood. Young people report that staff help them to learn how to look after themselves and prepare for when they will live on their own. They are helped to do this by engaging in 'ready to cope alone work' and spending time in the home's semi-independence flat. A leaving care service worker commented that a 'young person's needs are being met, educational support has been excellent'.

Quality of care

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

Staff have consistently high aspirations for all young people in the home. Young people mainly described the care and support they receive from staff at the home as very good. . An external professional described the services provided by the home as good and agreed that they would recommend the home to other external professionals. In response to the question what could staff at the home do better, a parent wrote: 'I cannot comment on this as I feel they all do their best.'

Staff use individualised behaviour strategies to try and help young people enjoy excellent relationships with them, other adults and other young people. Staff also comprehensively promote and support young people's agreed contact with family and friends, and are not deterred from achieving this when they encounter difficult working relationships with parents. Parents agreed that they are helped to keep in contact with their children.

The home successfully operates an individualised reward system with young people to promote their positive behaviour and relationships throughout different aspects of their day. Shortly before this inspection, the registered provider visitor reported, 'It is good to note that the young people do make use of the [positive rewards] system and look forward to spending their rewards of a weekend.' Good behaviour is rewarded and there are fair consequences for unacceptable behaviour which are recorded as required.

Young people access appropriate healthcare to promote their good health and well-being. Parents strongly agreed that staff make sure their children's health needs are met and an external professional agreed that young people access appropriate healthcare. They are supported to access healthcare to meet both their general and specialist healthcare needs. Their specialist needs are met by services such as weekly therapy sessions from the company's accredited therapists. However, on occasions young people choose not to engage with their healthcare appointments. When young people are prescribed medication to help address their difficulties, suitably trained staff ensure they are administered it safely.

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 monthly community meetings. Young people commented positively about the time they spend with their key worker. Since the last inspection, the home has received one complaint from a young person, which was satisfactorily resolved, and numerous compliments.

Young people are central to the planning and review of their care; staff ensure they are consistently involved in these processes. Each young person has an up-to-date placement plan and this ensures care is tailored to their individual needs and is focused on achieving clear outcomes. Staff build exceptionally effective partnerships with external professionals and consistently and effectively challenge any shortfalls in

their service delivery so that young people receive the support they need. For example, the Registered Manager recently wrote to a young person's social worker when they felt the pathway plan assessment report they had written for the young person did not reflect their current issues.

Staff comprehensively promote young people's educational attendance and achievement. Parents either strongly agreed or agreed that their children are given help with their school/college work. An external professional strongly agreed that young people's learning is improved by the care they receive. The home has received compliments from a placing social worker for supporting two young people to achieve good passes at GCSEs and for a key worker supporting a young person to establish links at college.

In addition to working with young people's education providers, staff also work dynamically with other external agencies, such as health and safeguarding professionals and the police, to try and secure positive outcomes for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people overwhelmingly selected 'all the time' when asked if they feel safe at the home and if staff deal well with bullying if it happens. Parents strongly agreed that staff make sure their children are kept safe. While the home's proactive safeguarding practice has not always been able to prevent young people from continuing to engage in damaging, risk taking behaviours, it has led to a reduction in such behaviours.

To help protect young people, the home uses a risk matrix, devised with a professional consultant, to identify key risks for each young person and agreed risk reduction strategies for them. These strategies, such as one-to-one staffing for individual young people, are implemented in practice and regularly reviewed and revised. Staff also teach young people risk management strategies as part of preparing them for their move to adulthood. When needed, young people's therapy sessions include a focus on the risk that they present to themselves or others.

The frequency with which young people go missing is minimal. On such occasions, young people are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return. They are protected by the home following the protocol with the local police regarding missing children, which includes the home having an individual missing protocol for each young person. To help keep missing incidents to a minimum, they are the subject of comprehensive reports beginning with the antecedents to the incident and the resolution meeting at the end of it.

There is minimum use of physical restraint. It has been used and recorded appropriately. When asked if the rules regarding the use of restraint are followed in the home, young people's only comments were that they had not seen a restraint or had never been subject to one. Consequences 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 that have arisen from significant events relating to the protection of young people, such as a serious incident necessitating calling the police to the home.

The home provides a good physical environment for the young people. Environmental checks required are up-to-date. An external professional agreed that staff provide a safe and comfortable environment that meets young people's needs. To this end a requirement and a recommendation from the previous inspection have been acted upon. As a result, the home now has the fire precautions required and fire risk management plans are implemented when a young person's behaviour raises fire safety concerns.

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. 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 suitable young person's guide to the home. At the time of this inspection, the Registered Manager was in the process of applying to Ofsted to vary the home's conditions of registration to be able to continue to accommodate young people when they become young adults.

The staffing numbers, the level of experience of staff and the support provided to them are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. The details of the staff team and the arrangements for their supervision, training and development are included in the home's Statement of Purpose.

Since the last inspection, the home's manager and staff team have participated in training to be able to continue to meet young people's needs, for example in terms of their health and safeguarding. Most staff have attained the professional qualification for their role, and those that have not are currently undertaking it. Regular supervision and staff team meetings also support staff to provide an outstanding quality of care to the young people.

The Registered Manager and deputy manager have attained the leadership and management qualification for their role. Together they are exercising effective leadership of the home's staff and operation, and ensuring the delivery of excellent quality care that endeavours to meet the individual needs of each young person.

To secure future improvement, the home has an action planning consolidation sheet. It brings together any required action identified in the last year, for example from the home's written development plan or an Ofsted inspection visit, to ensure it is

completed.

Regular monitoring of the operation of the home contributes to maintaining excellent quality of care and seeks to promote the welfare of the young people. Each month the Registered Manager reports on the matters they are required to monitor and Ofsted has received copies of these reports. However, they have not yet completed an overarching monitoring report on the home, at six monthly intervals, and sent a copy of this report to Ofsted. Such monitoring provides better oversight of the home as it enables the provider to identify any trends and issues of concern and to continually improve the quality of care. An external person visits the home each month on behalf of the responsible individual. These visits provide an opportunity for any young person, member of staff or parent to meet with the visitor and help them form an opinion of the standard of care provided. The visitor concluded the report of their January 2014 visit as follows: 'Within the home itself all of the young people were calm, happy and clear about what they would be undertaking for this particular day. All of the interactions that I observed with the young people were positive and the staff were very supportive.'

Since the last inspection, all significant events relating to the protection of young people at the home have been notified to the appropriate authorities, including Ofsted. Effective action has been taken following such incidents, such as referral to the LSCB and the Local Authority Designated Officer for safeguarding.

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.