

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is one of several homes belonging to the organisation. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to a maximum of four young people, who may have emotional and 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**.

Young people's safety and welfare significantly improve as a result of the outstanding care they receive. Young people make good progress in a number of key areas, notably developing a sense of belonging, keeping safe, developing self-esteem, reducing absences and education attendance.

Young people are positive about their care, relationships with staff and feel well supported. A social worker said, 'the staff team have shown high standards in their care and commitment to him. Individual and complex care has been offered to him in terms of his social, educational, therapeutic and health needs. He has responded really well since moving in to the home and has made huge improvements in most areas of his life'.

Young people feel safe and good attention to safeguarding ensures they are safe. As a result, young people's sense of self-worth, development of social and life skills and control of their lives are improved. A family member said, 'he is a different boy now, he joins in with other children, he has made a friend'.

This is a good home overall. The manager understands the strengths and areas of further development needed and is working hard to address those. However, the adequate judgement in the area of safeguarding reflects the areas to improve. These include: improving the quality of staff recording following significant incidents, to allow decisions on further action to be taken from a position of full knowledge and ensuring that young people are encouraged to communicate their views regarding their behaviour management plans.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support, particularly with regard to their behaviour management plans (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that the system in place to monitor the quality and accuracy of record keeping has all necessary information before deciding which action to be taken (NMS 22.1)
- ensure that all staff are familiar with the home's policies on record keeping, trained to maintain them and to understand the need to be careful, objective and clear when making records. (Guidance and Regulation Volume 5, Chapter 3, 3.28)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people recognise and are proud of their progress which effectively improves self-esteem and positive feelings of self-worth. Young people feel valued, worthwhile and that they are individually important. This sense of belonging and interest enables young people, including those who have been looked after in a number of other settings, to settle and form sustainable attachments. In turn this empowers young people to develop the confidence to form positive friendships with other young people.

Young people's health needs are well met and they enjoy a healthy well-balanced diet. Young people have access to the holistic services they need to ensure they experience a good quality of life. These include generic agencies as well as psychotherapy and specialist services. As a result young people learn the importance of healthy lifestyles, including the value of improved personal hygiene. One young person said, 'I have made improvements here and have grown a lot.'

Young people benefit from attendance either at the company school or a mainstream college. Strong personal education plans identify young people's progress and achievements. Staff work closely with young people on a day-to-day basis, through the key worker system, to promote positive educational outcomes. As a result, although not all young people are fully engaged with education, the majority have made significant progress from their starting points in both attendance and attainment; for example, entering for nationally recognised qualifications and obtaining a college placement. A social worker stated, 'staff have been able to assist him into settling in to (name) which has given him the support required. The outcome so far is very positive, at one point it was thought that he would never

attend and he is doing amazingly well'.

Young people are actively and positively engaged in inclusive activities within the home and local community. Young people take pride in their home and actively contribute towards home improvements. For example, working in the vegetable patch and offering to be the 'health and safety monitor'. Successful engagement in inclusive local activities provides young people with the opportunity to develop social and life skills. Consequently young people's self-esteem and sense of belonging improve as they make friends and develop an understanding of the needs of others. For example, attending army cadets and volunteering with a charity for the elderly.

Excellent contact is maintained between the home and young people's parents and important family members. The home recognises the importance of maintaining significant relationships for young people and actively ensures that this takes place. Young people fully benefit from the security, stability and sense of consistency this provides, both now, and for their longer-term relationships and support in adulthood. A parent said, 'I really am genuinely happy with the home, they communicate with me every week by phone and email'.

Quality of care

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

Young people are consistently positive about the support and care they receive within a homely and nurturing environment. Young people regularly refer to the setting as 'home' and the majority wish to stay there into adulthood; such is their feeling of belonging. The experienced, committed management team and staff members genuinely care about and respect each individual young person. Young people recognise and benefit from the strong commitment and high aspirations staff hold for them. A social worker stated, 'one thing that really strikes me about the staff, is that they appear to really like him. They talk positively about him in such a nice way. It must be very nice for him to feel this positive environment around him'.

Listening to young peoples' views and feelings and consulting and negotiating decisions is a major strength and integral to daily practice. Young people fully understand their views are important and they will be listened to. As a result, young people are actively involved in their care plans and reviews. Staff clearly explain the reasons why any requests or action cannot be taken in ways which are meaningful to young people; for example, unsupervised time away from the home. Staff place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice, irrespective of the barriers they present. Young people feel valued as individuals and their sense of self-worth and belonging are enhanced as a result.

Young people feel secure in the home, as management and staff know all of the young people in their care very well. Excellent, thorough and detailed plans outline comprehensive assessments for each young person. These accurately reflect young people's needs, starting points and chart their progress. Staff are proactive in updating plans to enable young people to fully benefit from the progress they have

made. The monthly 'Progress Report' enables young people to recognise and build on any achievement, no matter how small. This makes young people feel cared for and important. A social worker said, 'they put good processes in place, they understand. Whatever they are putting in place seems to be working' and a parent said, 'I am happy about the care in the home because they get him'.

Close and persistent liaison with specialist agencies ensures young people receive any necessary additional services, including health services, assessments and provision. Education is highly valued. As good parents, staff attend open days and parents evenings to support young people. This proactive attention to young people's specific needs supports them in their day-to-day care and for their transition in to independence and adult care. A social worker stated, 'he is in the right place and I will fight tooth and nail to keep him there for as long as possible. I believe (name) do a very good job and I am very pleased. They are trained to meet his needs and they do ask for specialist meetings when necessary. I need to find somewhere just like them to move him on to'.

Needs relating to young people's cultural, religious and personal identities are comprehensively identified in care planning and actively addressed in day-to-day living. Young people are provided with excellent opportunities to participate in a range of inclusive outings and holidays, introducing them to new experiences and ways of life. Young people and their family members feel this opens new horizons for them in comparison to previous experiences. Young people's self-esteem, confidence and sense of belonging are further enriched by involvement in inclusive local clubs and organisations.

Young people enjoy living in a large, comfortable, well-furnished home in a rural location. They each have their own lockable bedroom which is personalised to their taste. Photographs of young people on shared events and activities adorn the walls. There are a range of spaces where young people can spend time together, watching television, working with gymnasium equipment or playing pool, as well as quiet rooms if they wish to be alone. The detached house has large grounds where young people can play football, or participate in gardening. Young people take pride in their home where they report they are happy, feel they belong and where their important family members are welcome. For example, a young person chose to have a birthday barbecue party in the garden attended by his relatives and all in the home 'because they are all my family'.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people, their family members and professionals all report that they are safe and feel safe within the home. Young people are protected from harm by the proactive staff team for whom safeguarding is a priority. A family member said, 'he is definitely, definitely safe there because they really take care of him. I am very happy with everything they do there'.

There are few episodes of bullying and no young person reported it as a problem. Any past issues have been appropriately managed allowing young people the opportunity to learn from their behaviours. For example, one young person wrote, 'I agree what's been said'.

Missing episodes are extremely rare in this home. In some cases this is a dramatic improvement on past behaviours in other homes. Locally agreed protocols are effectively followed if there are any incidents further safeguarding young people. A social worker commented, 'he has engaged well with the staff and is not absconding anymore which is really positive. They have made that difference'.

Young people learn positive behaviours through the effective use of the reward system. Young people take pride in their achievements and want to behave well. The sanction process is very well managed. Realistic, proportionate sanctions are imposed and monitored by the manager. This enables young people the opportunity to give back positively to the home while learning the consequences of their actions. For example, working in the garden. A young person wrote, 'it was good to do gardening and talk'.

Strong care planning is supported by individual behaviour management plans which clearly detail young people's specific needs. However, behaviour management plans are not prepared with or signed by young people therefore they may not fully understand what is expected of them.

For the majority of the time young people and staff enjoy good positive relationships based on mutual affection and trust. Staff work extremely hard to be good role models for young people and provide them with a safe place in which to make sense of their past experiences and build resilience and appropriate managing skills. However, on occasion young people's behaviours have caused injuries to staff and presented a risk to young people resulting in the need for restraints and police involvement. Nevertheless, all physical interventions are managed appropriately and young people fully supported after any such incident. One young person wrote after being offered medical assistance, 'no thanks, I'm OK' and 'sorry'.

All behaviour management incidents are recorded to detail specific situations and the impact on young people. These are then linked with other records kept within the home to ensure that young people's behaviours are monitored to protect them and prevent them from becoming involved in risk taking behaviours. However, on occasion the recording of incidents has not been detailed enough. This does not allow decisions on further interventions to be made from a position of full knowledge.

Robust recruitment procedures are effectively applied. They are further bolstered by young people's direct involvement in the process. Young people are safeguarded by these measures.

Young people's physical safety is assured by good health and safety procedures. Established systems are in place for the routine checking and servicing of all fire equipment and other appliances. Young people know how to exit the home in the

event of a fire and practice how to do this.

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and conscientiously managed. The registered manager consistently communicates high expectations to staff about sustaining improvement and knows the young people in her care extremely well. She has real aspiration for young people to achieve and works in partnership with all other agencies to promote that care. A social worker stated, 'we have never had a problem receiving or giving communication. (Name) is a supportive manager, she attends meetings wherever they are held'.

The registered manager maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually alongside the general running of the home. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed. As a result young people's progress is monitored and the demonstrable differences the home has made to young people's outcomes are identified. This promotes and maintains high standards while contributing to young people's experience of being valued. A young person stated that the registered manager should 'get outstanding for herself'.

Independent monitoring visits routinely contribute to improvements, including ascertaining young people's views on their care and experiences. The organisation communicates with and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of any significant incidents ensuring young people are protected by multi-agency decision making.

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. In addition, young people receive comprehensive information in their individual 'Children's Guide'. This clearly informs them about the home and the care that is to be provided. As a result young people are appropriately placed thereby enhancing their life experience and opportunities for success. A social worker said, 'he was well matched when placed at (name)'.

There has been a significant turnover of staff since the last inspection. However, young people and staff say that this is 'for the better' and report that new staff members have quickly become a part of the home. The consistent management team have ensured that young people have not been adversely affected by these changes. As a result young people benefit from high staffing levels and the care and attention they receive from the well supported and committed staff team. Staff members report that they receive strong peer and management support and benefit from a good, formal supervision process which enables them to fully assist young people.

All staff members either hold or are enrolled on the National Vocational Qualification at level 3, or a diploma course, apart from new staff members still within their probationary period. In addition, staff attend specific training to meet the individual needs of young people and further training is available in specialist subjects to

enhance their skills. Young people are cared for by staff who are appropriately trained to meet their needs. However, some incident recordings are not clear and staff would benefit from being provided with specific training on how to accurately record all information.

Young people benefit from the proactive, partnership approach effected by the management to ensure that professional visits and reviews take place in a timely manner. Young people's records are clear, up-to-date and contribute to an understanding of their past experiences, day-to-day lives and progress and plans for the future. They are stored securely.

There were no requirements of recommendations made at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, the manager assures improvement and further benefits to young people by the efficient use of monthly auditing processes to identify strengths and areas for development.

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.