

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home that provides care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender who may have behavioural and emotional 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 benefit from the excellent standard of care they receive in the home and they make good progress overall. Staff work hard to develop positive nurturing relationships with young people. This helps young people to feel settled and to grow in confidence and self-esteem. Young people report that they are happy in their home.

All young people attend school very regularly which maximises their opportunity to achieve. They are supported to develop plans for further education and employment which will improve their chances in later life. Young people make good progress towards developing the practical and emotional skills they will need for future independence. Their emotional and physical health needs are fully addressed. They are supported to learn about healthy lifestyles in order that they can understand how to maintain their good health when they leave care.

Staff have a very good understanding of the vulnerabilities of the young people in their care and make sure that they are protected. They have successfully supported young people to appropriately manage conflict in their lives. As a result, young people's behaviour has improved over time. Young people themselves say that they feel safe and are well looked after.

The manager provides strong leadership to the staff team who feel that they are supported very well in their work with young people. The manager monitors the progress of young people closely. She takes action on any shortfall that is identified as a result of monitoring activity in order to improve the quality of care. She works

very effectively with professionals from other agencies ensuring that young people have access to services they need and that they benefit from a consistent approach.

One requirement and one recommendation have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to the manager's monthly monitoring reports and to an aspect of young people's behaviour outside the home.

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 that the system that is in place for monitoring the quality of care in the home provides for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people take responsibility for their behaviour, specifically in relation to anti-social behaviour outside the home. (NMS 3.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from settled long term placements which enable them to develop and sustain positive relationships with staff. As a result their confidence and self-esteem grows over time. This helps them to achieve positive outcomes.

Young people have an identified education placement that is appropriate to their individual needs and they attend very regularly. This has helped them to make good progress in education from their starting point on admission to the home. Young people have aspirations for further education and employment and are pursuing qualifications to help them to achieve their goals.

Young people generally enjoy good health. They eat well and attend primary health care services for routine health checks. They also have access to psychology

services. This means that their emotional health needs are addressed. Young people learn how to develop a healthy lifestyle and about issues that have a negative impact on their health, such as smoking and the use of drugs and alcohol. Young people who smoke, or who are believed to misuse substances, have prompt access to relevant agencies to help them to stop. Consequently, young people reduce their misuse of substances over time. This has a positive impact on their health.

Most young people have made friendships in their local community and they spend leisure time with them. They try a range of activities in the home, such as going to the gym and attending youth clubs. This broadens their experiences and supports their general development. All young people enjoy trips out with staff, for example to theme parks and the coast. They reported that they had had a very enjoyable holiday with staff in the summer.

Young people maintain positive contact with members of their families. This benefits them emotionally and supports their sense of identity and their knowledge of their history and background.

Young people learn how to be more independent in preparation for leaving care. They have plans in place for future employment and are developing practical skills, such as budgeting, cooking and cleaning. The work that they do with staff and the relationships they experience in the home help young people to develop their social skills which supports their preparation for independence. Some young people who have left care and live independently keep in touch with the home, telephoning and visiting staff to let them know how they are doing. This indicates that they value the relationships they had with staff and remain confident that staff are interested in their progress.

Quality of care

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

Young people report they are well looked after. They say that they 'get on well' with staff and know that staff are interested in their welfare. One young person said staff 'are sticking with me even though I can misbehave and are trying their best to help me' and another reported 'staff are understanding and listen - they are nice and relaxed'. Relatives and professionals also comment positively on the quality of care in the home. For example, a parent said 'staff couldn't help (name) any more than they do' and a social worker reported 'staff consistently and persistently look at different ways of improving outcomes for each young person'.

Young people benefit from being cared for in a nurturing environment. Staff value and respond to young people as individuals, ensuring that they have an excellent level of care that is tailored to meet their specific needs. They develop detailed placement plans for young people. These address every aspect of young people's needs, including those that arise from their culture or religion. Care staff support young people to be fully involved in all the decisions that are made about their lives. For example, young people contribute to and agree their plans and attend reviews.

This helps to develop young people's sense of self-esteem and supports their progress. Young people feel confident about their relationships with staff. They report that they are able to approach any member of staff for support. This helps young people to achieve good outcomes.

Staff have built exceptionally effective working relationships with partner agencies, such as the police, health, education and youth offending services. This enables young people to have access to resources they need and ensures that there is consistency in the way staff from different agencies work with and respond to young people. This supports young people's progress.

Before they came to live in the home, some young people had struggled to engage with education and had either been excluded or were not attending regularly. Staff have worked very effectively with education providers to ensure that young people have a provision that is appropriate to their needs. The manager and staff advocate strongly for young people to ensure that any problems that arise at school are resolved quickly. They establish very good routines in the home to promote young people's attendance at school and they support them on site when this is needed. As a result of the excellent work of the staff team young people who had not been at school previously have managed to re-engage with education. They now attend very regularly and are doing well.

Staff have worked very effectively with young people to help them to learn to behave in socially acceptable ways. They positively challenge discrimination, encouraging all young people to respect each other and staff. As a result of the way in which staff work with them young people's behaviour has improved over time; they generally behave well towards one another and staff in the home. However, recently some young people have become involved in anti-social behaviour outside the home. Staff are addressing this with the support of the police and youth offending team.

The home is maintained to an excellent standard overall and provides young people with a comfortable, well furnished, warm and welcoming environment. Young people confirmed that they like their home. It is suitably located in a residential area that has good transport links. This enables young people to use public transport to travel independently as part of their preparation for leaving care.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are effective arrangements in place to ensure the safety of young people. For example, staff are trained in safeguarding and safe care and there are a range of policies and procedures to guide staff practice. Staff have a good understanding of the home's safeguarding protocol. The manager has built very strong relationships with the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) and safeguarding matters are responded to promptly and managed well to ensure that young people are protected.

Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to keeping

young people safe and have a very good knowledge of individual young people's vulnerabilities. These are recorded in clear and detailed risk assessments, ensuring that there are appropriate plans in place to protect young people. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain up to date and reflect young people's emerging needs.

Professionals and relatives report that they believe young people are safe in the home. Young people also say that they feel safe. They know how to complain and feel confident that their complaints are responded to properly. Young people say that they feel that they can talk to staff and that staff listen to them. This contributes to their sense of security in the home.

Most young people do not go missing from the home. Staff work with young people to lessen the likelihood of this happening. If young people do go missing staff follow the home's robust procedure, working closely with relevant agencies to ensure young people's safe return. The manager has worked hard to build up a very effective relationship with local police. She ensures that there is regular communication with officers about young people. Police officers also visit the home informally to get to know young people and staff. This promotes a positive relationship with young people.

Staff are trained to respond positively to challenging behaviour. This includes training in the use of restraint. However, this has only ever been used on one occasion since the home opened. This demonstrates that the strategies staff are using with young people are effective in defusing difficult situations.

The home's arrangements for recruiting staff protect young people by ensuring that all staff are vetted and assessed as suitable before they start work.

Young people benefit from living in a safe environment. Equipment is regularly checked to ensure that it is in good order. Health and safety risk assessments are completed and are regularly reviewed, ensuring that they are up to date. Consequently, potential hazards are identified and are either eliminated or minimised. This protects young people, staff and visitors.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed extremely effectively. The manager is qualified and experienced and provides strong leadership to the staff team. She keeps up to date with new legislation and developments and discusses these with the staff team to enable them to maintain their knowledge of current care practice. She has an excellent understanding of the home's strengths and areas for further development and encourages full involvement from staff in producing the development plans for the home.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a consistent and committed team of

staff. Staff are either qualified or working to gain a relevant qualification. The manager ensures that staff are well trained. She is proactive in engaging with other agencies such as the LSCB to identify training opportunities for staff. Staff are enthusiastic about the variety of training they are able to attend, reporting that it has helped to develop their knowledge in many areas.

Staff confirm that they receive excellent support from their manager. Regular formal supervision gives them the opportunity to discuss their work and the care and well-being of young people, and to identify their development needs. Staff confirm that they also have access to guidance from the manager outside these formal meetings. This ensures that they are fully supported to maintain good standards in the home. Staff report that they work well together and morale in the team is very high. This communicates itself to young people who benefit from the very positive atmosphere in the home.

The home's monitoring arrangements are extremely robust. An independent person visits the home every month and completes thorough checks in line with the regulations. Copies of the reports that are made of these checks are sent to Ofsted. The manager closely monitors the care that is given to young people and the progress they make. As part of this process, she consults regularly with young people, their families and other agencies, seeking their views about the quality of care. She produces clear reports of her findings and sends copies to Ofsted. However, the reports do not fully reflect the consultation that has taken place or show how this has been used to improve practice in the home. The home has a good track for responding to issues identified through the monitoring and inspection process, demonstrating a clear commitment to improving the service that is given to young people. The recommendation made at the last inspection is fully met. The manager took prompt action to repair the damage to a window that was identified at the last inspection. This has improved the quality of the environment.

The home's Statement of Purpose is detailed and accurately describes how the home works. It is made available to relatives and professionals so they can see how young people are cared for. The young person's guide to the service is colourful and clearly written. It gives young people a good understanding of the routines of the home as well as information about their rights in care.

Staff keep clear and detailed information about young people. All records are appropriately cross referenced to individual young people's files. This ensures that they have a full record of their time in the home which contributes to their understanding of their history. Young people confirmed that they are encouraged to read all their records and to contribute to them. This ensures that their views are incorporated into them. All information that is held about young people is kept secure to protect their right to confidentiality.

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.