

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to accommodate three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned by a private organisation.

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**.

This is a very well-run children's home with a committed and enthusiastic staff team. The staff team try their utmost to enable young people to take advantage of what is on offer as well as nurturing and supporting them in their progress and development.

Individual care plans enable young people to be offered a bespoke service which enables them to make good progress, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. This enables them to develop their social and life skills. Young people benefit as a result of living at this home and have their welfare and well-being treated as paramount.

This home's robust approach toward safeguarding ensures young people are as safe as can be expected, without limiting their opportunities to engage fully in the things they enjoy. Staff are conscientious in their approach to ensure the young people's safety; they work particularly hard to manage any absences from the home.

The operation of the home is underpinned by high quality management and effective and reflective systems which aim to promote young people's progress and to develop staff skills and competencies.

One requirement and one recommendation are made as a result of this inspection. These relate to ensuring that records of how complaints have been resolved are clear and that the home reviews how it records and implements contact with young people's education placements.

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
24 (2001)	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation. (Regulation 24 (5))	24/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- review how the home maintains regular contact with each child's school, college, and other education settings, with staff attending all parents meetings as appropriate in line with their placement plan. (NMS 8.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress to understand their backgrounds. They are able to develop positive relationships with members of staff and take advantage of opportunities to learn about their life stories and how to learn from these and develop their resilience and self-sufficiency.

Young people develop their knowledge of healthy living and are able to take responsibility for their own health at a rate commensurate with their understanding and vulnerability. For example, they make appointments with opticians and dentists and receive health assessments. Opportunities to learn about health issues such as drug misuse, alcohol consumption and sexual health are readily available for the young people. As a result of this, incidents involving alcohol and drug misuse have decreased significantly.

Young people benefit from having educational placements. On the whole they take advantage of the opportunities given, although sustained attendance for some young people is not always achieved. However, other young people achieve excellent levels of attendance. Where young people have engaged with education they have made good educational attainment and progress. They benefit from living in an environment where school attendance and the value of education are promoted and encouraged.

Young people are supported to learn and consolidate invaluable life and social care skills within the home and in the wider community. They are enabled, through sensitive and thoughtful staff support, to engage in independent skills programmes which are specific to their abilities and vulnerabilities. As a result, young people make good progress in their social and practical skills, for instance by regularly going shopping and cooking for themselves as well as learning budgeting skills. Specific, individualised and well-planned programmes enable young people to prepare for independence at a rate with which they can cope.

Young people show a marked reduction in levels of offending and challenging behaviour. They are enabled to develop coping skills and to understand their behaviour. This in turn helps them to develop strategies which increase their life chances and promote their self-esteem.

Quality of care

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

Staff have high aspirations for the young people in their care. They consistently challenge barriers to ensure their full participation in education and within the wider community. Close support for the young people ensures that their attendance and achievement are promoted and encouraged without let up and with great drive and energy. This approach has helped young people to achieve formal qualifications, often for the first time in their lives. The excellent support they receive has enabled them to attend vocational courses, which has vastly increased their chances for future employment. Although good communication with education is achieved on the whole, it is not structured or planned and recorded consistently in all cases. This can mean that the feedback from school and education placements can be mainly related to negative incidents rather than regular contact where progress and positive feedback can be shared and celebrated.

Young people's views and preferences are highly valued and seen as central to the running of the home. Every opportunity is given to young people to voice their opinions and they have a wide range of choices in which to do this, both formally and informally. There is an embedded culture that the promotion of young people's views is to be encouraged and enabled. This a particular strength of the home.

Expectations of behaviour are appropriate and are implemented consistently in practice within an environment where mutual respect is promoted as the norm. Detailed individual behaviour plans, combined with clear boundaries and expectations, enable members of staff to offer an environment where young people are given every opportunity to thrive and develop.

Young people are provided with care that is consistent with the specific needs of their placement plan. Their individual needs are fully assessed and incorporated into detailed plans of care in line with the overall placement objective. Such plans guide staff in effectively implementing the individual aims and objectives in practice. Young people are involved in contributing to the development and review of their own plans

and encouraged to attend and participate in all reviews. The home ensures detailed reports are provided for statutory reviews, as well as their own internal reviews.

A suitable complaints policy is implemented in practice. Young people know how to make a complaint or express a concern with further details available, including independent advocacy services, within the young persons' guide, website and displayed openly in the home. On one occasion the outcome and resolution of a complaint had not been clearly recorded in the relevant document, although it had been recorded elsewhere. While the complaint has been resolved to the young person's satisfaction, the recording does not make this clear to other professionals who may wish to see the document.

Young people's health care needs are met very well; their emotional and psychological needs are met to a particularly high standard. Health care plans are in place, which highlight young people's specific needs, including their medical history and current medication. Excellent joint-working arrangements, coupled with very regular on-site psychological input, ensure that young people who require more targeted and specialised interventions are provided with these.

The staff team enables the young people to enrich their social and life experiences by being able to access an excellent range of activities. Activities such as horse riding, swimming, shopping, bowling and the cinema are readily available and give the young people opportunities to fill their leisure time constructively and purposefully.

The home is very well maintained and very comfortable. Young people are able to choose the décor and furnishings in their rooms and to personalise them with pictures and posters. This approach enables them to feel an investment in their environment and that their views and preferences are listened to.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has successfully nurtured an environment where young people feel safe. A robust approach toward child protection ensures that staff receive suitable training in safeguarding matters. Policies and procedures are clear and incorporate appropriate safeguarding protocols with staff knowing what to do in the event of concerns. Young people are assessed on arrival and reviewed regularly, with staff displaying a sound appreciation of how to keep them as safe as possible.

Robust arrangements are in place for young people who go missing. Staff are acutely aware of the dangers that young people may face while they are missing out in the community and ensure that young people have an understanding of these. Staff do not take for granted that young people are staying with friends and family when absent, and are mindful that young people may be at risk of sexual exploitation and other dangers. Safeguards are then put in place to minimise any risk to promote the young person's welfare. They keep in constant contact with young people and

significant others in their lives to encourage their safe return home. The home has a protocol which is in line with local police practice with regards to managing and supporting young people who are missing or absent without permission. Members of staff show a high standard of commitment in supporting young people to return and in ensuring that they are safe when they are away from the home without permission. On occasion staff have travelled significant distances to remain in contact with young people who are absent. This underpins the message to the young people that they are important and that the staff want them to be safe and to return.

There are strong and consistent strategies for behaviour management that reflect young people's individual needs. Staff follow these consistently and as a result young people are cared for safely. Restraint is rare within this home and there is a strong focus on de-escalation techniques and enabling young people to develop strategies to manage their own behaviour.

A comprehensive recruitment process ensures young people are not cared for by staff until all required checks have been completed and they are deemed suitable to work at the home. There are clear expectations for visitors to follow and staff are vigilant to ensure that visitors are supervised.

Health and safety in the home is given a strong priority to ensure the safety of young people and staff alike. Regular health and safety checks are completed, including fire drills and fire alarm checks. Routine servicing ensures all areas of the home are maintained appropriately, including the testing of electrical installations and portable equipment. Comprehensive and regularly reviewed risk assessments are completed on activities away from the home. These are effective in highlighting the risks, how they may be reduced further and the actions staff must take to ensure safety. Such an approach allows young people to safely enjoy and participate in pursuits such as horse riding and swimming.

Leadership and management

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

Young people and staff alike benefit from a home that is managed extremely well. An effective and efficient management approach ensures that excellent standards of care are expected and implemented. Strong leadership and guidance is provided by the Registered Manager and senior staff to the team. There is a culture that seeks to improve care and to have high expectations from adults and young people alike.

Excellent training is in place for staff. They state that it is of high quality and enables them to learn and explore matters that are important for the care of young people, for example, medication training, equality and diversity and cognitive behavioural therapy. This ensures that they can meet the emotional, physical and individual aspects of caring for young people. All staff have or are in the process of completing their Diploma Level 3 qualification or equivalent. This means that they have a good theoretical basis to underpin their excellent practice.

Members of staff report excellent levels of support from the manager and the home's psychologist via formal supervision, as well as group supervision. This means that all staff have a good understanding of the young people in their care and that they ensure that the home is a nurturing and safe place for them to live.

Reflective practice and an ambition to improve ensures that there is no complacency and an excellent capacity for continued improvement. The home has a development plan which outlines how management want the service to develop in the next year. One example of improvement is the development of an educational unit based at the company head office which is available for all young people who live at the home and who may not be receiving education when they are admitted.

The monitoring of the home is highly effective. It is clear that all documents are monitored and reviewed to identify any themes and patterns that may impact on young people's care. The outcome of these are discussed by staff in team meetings so that they are aware of their group and individual responsibilities to provide good childcare and to promote young people's outcomes. Monitoring undertaken by the Registered Manager and external members of the organisation also keeps staff up to date about the strengths and weaknesses of the home.

The home has addressed requirements made at the last inspection and has ensured that the missing person protocol is set out in line with local police practice as well as ensuring that young people meet with the visitor during monitoring visits. A clear, written Statement of Purpose is in place that informs parents and social workers of how the home operates and plans to meet young people's needs. The home's written records are completed to a good standard and are stored with due regard for 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.