

Inspection report for children's home

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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**.

Young people receive high quality care, support and guidance resulting in them making significant progress in improving their behaviour and in their personal development. An enthusiastic and motivated staff team, led by a highly effective and experienced Registered Manager, are successful in providing personalised care to meet young people's individual needs. Young people develop positive, trusting relationships with staff resulting in increased self-esteem, a greater acceptance of the support offered by staff and more confidence to overcome their difficulties.

Young people's safety and well-being are central to practice at the home. Consistent implementation of individual strategies within a structured environment keeps young people as safe as possible, resulting in young people reducing their risk taking behaviour.

Strong, effective leadership and management results in continuous monitoring of the service to sustain high quality of care. The Registered Manager successfully uses robust monitoring activities to focus on areas for development to improve young people's outcomes and maximise their progress.

One shortfall relates to recording of the length of time of staff supervision sessions.

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 a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff, including the registered person. The record is signed by the supervisor and the member of staff at the end of the supervision. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress during their time at the home, especially when taking into account their starting points at the time of their admission. A parent stated that their child is 'doing really well at the home'. Highly individualised support helps young people develop trusting relationships with members of staff, which build their confidence and self-esteem so they feel valued and respected.

Young people benefit from close attention to their health needs. Staff support them to lead healthy lifestyles as part of their independence programmes, by encouraging them to take exercise, eat nutritious meals and attend routine health appointments. Young people receive support for their emotional and psychological needs from psychologists and a cognitive behaviour specialist. The staff team, in collaboration with these specialists, implement strategies to develop young people's coping skills and emotional resilience. Consequently, young people are gaining insight, improving their behaviour and their social interaction with others.

Educationally, some young people are making significant improvement. They gain from living in an environment where education is valued. Some young people's attendance at school or college is excellent, resulting in significant achievement in GCSE examinations and very good progress in college.

Young people participate in activities in the local community such as the cinema and horse riding and as part of their independence programmes they do their own shopping. They are encouraged to pursue interests outside the home to widen their social experiences. Within the home, they are involved in preparing and cooking meals, washing clothes and tidying their rooms.

Young people benefit from regular contact with their family and friends. Staff support them to keep in touch in accordance with their placement plans and staff are proactive in promoting and sustaining contact. Consequently, young people benefit from improved family relationships.

Young people are being very well prepared for a successful transition to independence or moving on to future placements. Independence programmes are tailored to meet individual needs, with young people gradually taking on more responsibility for their daily lives as they demonstrate their competence and reliability. These programmes include using public transport, planning, shopping and

cooking their meals and using a bank account. Part of these programmes include working on a life and living skills award accrediting them for the skills and knowledge they are acquiring, giving young people a sense of achievement in gaining valuable life skills in preparation for the changes ahead.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a nurturing environment where staff value them as individuals. Extremely committed staff work in partnership with young people, enabling them to learn about themselves and develop self-esteem. Staff are responsive to each young person giving them confidence to trust staff, develop constructive relationships and react positively to the support given to them. Relationships are supportive and good humoured. Young people have ready access to senior staff on a regular, informal basis. Staff are sensitive to and mindful of changing dynamics within the group when new young people move in. They assist young people to cope and deal with issues arising from learning to live alongside others.

Staff value young people's views and actively consult with individuals. Regular key work sessions and monthly reviews allow young people to put forward their views and affect the day-to-day running of the home. For example, young people voiced their opinion on the age-appropriateness of their time for returning to the home in the evening. Staff considered their suggestion and altered the time limit. Staff respond to young people's requests and ensure they receive an explanation when it is not possible to act on their wishes. Young people are confident and assertive in informing staff if they are not happy about something. Staff offer them a form to make a formal complaint and make sure they know the process, but young people are happy to resolve complaints informally by taking directly to staff.

Detailed and comprehensive care plans identify young people's individual needs and the support they require to make progress in all aspects of their lives. Pre-placement planning ensures staff have the necessary information to meet a young person's needs on admission. The home uses a lodge in Scotland as a location in which to assess young people's needs away from distractions; this assessment provides information for detailed care planning. From the information in the care plan and individualised risk assessments, staff compile very detailed guidelines which outline the strategies to be put into practice to support young people and manage their behaviour.

Young people contribute to the care planning progress through regular key work sessions and monthly reviews of their progress, enabling them to have more involvement in the process and a greater understanding of their goals and progress. Key workers link the content of one-to-one sessions to particular development needs. Staff recognise each young person's specific vulnerabilities and plan sensitively to assist them. Each young person has their own timetable for the week providing them with a structure and routine. Close monitoring of plans and guidelines allows staff to respond to young people's changing needs and to provide relevant and constructive

support to help them overcome difficulties and make progress. A social worker stated that she is involved in regular reviews with staff to ensure a young person's individual needs are met.

Young people live in an environment that actively supports their physical and psychological well-being. Young people on independence programmes plan, shop and cook their own meals with staff support to ensure they make healthy choices. Staff encourage young people to take physical exercise and participate themselves to encourage young people to take part. Staff monitor young people's physical health care and promote their emotional and psychological welfare to particularly high standards.

Therapeutic provision at the home has a high priority, with young people receiving support from psychologists and cognitive behaviour specialists to meet their needs. Staff have training to support this therapeutic approach and implement specific strategies to assist young people. If young people refuse to engage with individual therapeutic interventions, staff receive support and guidance from psychologists to help them understand young people's complex behaviour and develop strategies to help them move forward. Young people requiring guidance on specific health issues such as substance misuse receive specialist support and advice from outside agencies, enabling them to make informed decisions about their own health. A robust system for the administration of medication is in place, ensuring staff dispense medication safely.

The motivated and committed staff team is proactive in supporting young people to attend education and achieve to their full potential. Education is highly valued at the home and staff advocate on young people's behalf to overcome barriers to their full inclusion and ensure they are not disadvantaged in any way. When young people are reluctant to engage in education, staff endeavour to seek alternative arrangements appropriate to their needs. Young people therefore have improved chances of achieving their educational potential and improved opportunities. During leisure time, staff encourage young people to pursue individual interests. Young people have a weekly activity timetable to assist them in using their leisure time positively and beneficially to widen their social experiences. Though young people are of an age when they spend time away from the home socialising with their friends, staff work hard to engage them in interesting activities.

Young people live in a comfortable, well-maintained home in a quiet residential area. It is decorated and furnished to a good standard providing a homely environment. Young people personalise their bedrooms, choosing the colour of the decoration, which helps them to have a sense of identity and belonging.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

A culture of safety protects young people and their welfare is central to practice at the home. Young people have no concerns regarding their safety while living at the

home. A social worker commented that young people are 'definitely safe at the home' and a parent also reported that young people are safe at the home. Staff understand young people's specific vulnerabilities and appropriate measures are in place to protect them. Individual, detailed assessments identify risk-taking behaviour and outline appropriate measures to protect young people and minimise potential harm. Staff regularly review risk assessments and evaluate risk reduction strategies to assess their effectiveness.

Structure, routine and boundaries enable young people to feel safe. A key strength of the home is the consistent implementation of boundaries. A social worker commented that, 'Staff maintain boundaries, they stick to the plan and don't back down,' and this has resulted in a young person, 'Making significant progress in keeping to boundaries and improving their behaviour.' A parent reported that staff at the home 'do an amazing job' and are excellent in terms of providing 'consistent structured care and keeping to boundaries'.

Clear procedures are in place if a young person is absent from the home without permission. All staff are aware of the steps to be taken if a young person attempts to abscond and they are extremely proactive in their actions to keep a young person safe. Staff follow young people, endeavour to persuade them to return and report their absence to the police following agreed protocols. Liaison with the local police missing from home coordinator is positive and constructive, ensuring swift and effective action is taken in relation to the young person's vulnerability. If a young person is away from the home without permission, staff take initiative and contact the young person's friends, families and acquaintances in an attempt to locate their whereabouts and ensure they are safe. The local police missing from home coordinator commented that, 'Staff are very proactive, they adopt a multi-agency approach to work together to protect young people who are reported absent.' Young people who arrive at the home with histories of being absent without permission are helped by staff to reduce such risk-taking behaviour.

The staff team have a positive ethos of protecting young people and promoting positive behaviour. A system is in place to reward young people when they achieve behaviour targets. They can use points for a range of exciting activities, or rewards individually negotiated with staff, which motivate and provide incentives for young people to behave appropriately and achieve specific targets relating to their care plan.

Strong relationships between staff and young people underpin young people's safety at the home and result in very infrequent use of physical intervention, which is used only as a last resort. The skills and experience of staff that are trained in managing challenging behaviour, enables them to use de-escalation techniques effectively to avert potentially difficult situations. Staff use sanctions appropriately as a response to unacceptable behaviour and evaluate the effectiveness of the measure in supporting a young person. Young people's offending behaviour has reduced over a period of time due to the staff's positive safeguarding approach.

Excellent health and safety measures are in place to protect young people and staff

from the risk of harm. All checks are up to date, appropriate fire measures are in place and risk assessments identify potential hazards and risk-reduction measures. The home follows robust recruitment procedures to protect young people by making sure staff are suitable.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager provides excellent leadership and management of the home. Her experience and passion for improving outcomes for young people positively influence the staff team so they are enthusiastic in providing an extremely high standard of care. Staff demonstrate a clear understanding of the needs of young people at the home individually and as part of living in a group. The Registered Manager demonstrates a commitment to continually improving the service provided for young people.

Recent developments include the appointment of a deputy manager to strengthen support for staff and monitoring of practice within the home. Another development is the establishment of more structure for young people from the time of admission to establish routines and expectations in relation to education and activities. The therapeutic provision at the home has been considerably bolstered by establishing regular workshops for staff led by psychologists and cognitive behaviour specialists; these have helped staff develop skills and knowledge in supporting young people by means of a therapeutic approach. This increased focus on therapeutic intervention is having a positive effect on young people, resulting in their improved behaviour and greater reflection and understanding of their social responses in difficult situations.

The Statement of Purpose is clear and informative. The home meets the expressed aim of providing a safe, stable and structured environment in which young people can settle and then grow emotionally and physically into mature young adults, attaining confidence and independence to become positive members of the community. Young people can access information about the home by means of a website designed for the purpose; young people are directed to this site prior to their admission. This enables young people to be clear about what the home provides to meet their needs.

Management monitoring of care practice is extremely robust. The Registered Manager undertakes weekly reviews of the service. Reports of monitoring on behalf of the provider are detailed and comprehensive, resulting in recommendations for improvement and an action plan to remedy shortfalls. The home uses an assessment tool to regularly review staff performance in addition to individual monthly supervision and annual appraisal. The home maintains staff supervision records but these do not specify the length of time of the session.

A development plan is in place identifying improvements planned for the year and progress is evident in achieving these plans. These effective processes sustain the provision of high quality care, demonstrate a capacity to improve and support

positive outcomes for young people through a model of provision based on the individual needs of each young person.

An experienced and confident staff team maintain firm boundaries for young people in relation to risk-taking behaviour. Support systems, including group supervision from a psychologist and child-focused workshops led by a psychologist, develop staff resilience and consistency in dealing with extremely challenging and complex behaviour.

Staff training and development has a high priority within the organisation, with management keen to ensure staff have personal development opportunities in addition to mandatory training and training to meet young people's specific needs. This level of training and support ensures staff are competent and confident in supporting young people to improve their future life chances.

Record keeping and report writing are a strength of the home. The home maintains records electronically and these provide a current account of each young person's life in the home and the progress they make. Notifications of significant events are made appropriately. Parents and social workers report that communication with them is excellent and there is very much an ethos of 'working together' to support young people.

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.