

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Clare
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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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care for two young people, of either sex, between the ages of 10 and 17 years with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. It provides medium to long-term residential care and is owned by a private company. The home is located in a residential area that has easy access to local facilities and public transport.

Both young people were present for part of this visit and made a contribution to the inspection. They are unaccompanied asylum seekers and are undertaking an independence programme to enable them to move independently into the community when they are 18.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

This setting is highly effective in enabling young people to build the skills and resources they will need to successfully make their transition into independent living. By identifying individual needs and areas for development the outcomes seen to date are excellent. The views of the young people are taken seriously and they are very much involved in their care planning and running of the home. The manager and his staff team have respectful and trusting relationships with the young people that are reciprocated. Young people's safety is a high priority with qualified and experienced staff who are able to address any safeguarding concerns. This is a setting where young people feel safe.

The senior managers make excellent use of rigorous monitoring systems relating to the quality of care and service development that results in improving outcomes for young people. This is a company that is ambitious and energetic for continuous improvement.

Two recommendations have been made relating to training and record keeping. Neither of these recommendations was seen to have a negative impact on the care of the young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff receive training to enhance their individual skills and to keep them

up-to-date with professional and legal developments (NMS 18)

- ensure records are legible, and are written in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are provided with accommodation and support that enables them to acquire a range of skills and resources they will need to successfully make their transition into independent living. Outcomes to date are extremely positive. Young people benefit from highly-individualised support which helps them to grow in confidence and make excellent progress. They are assisted to develop a positive self view, knowledge of their background and emotional resilience, so they will be able to live independently in the community post 18-years-old. The key worker system enables young people to focus on their goals. Regular informal and formal meetings provide one of numerous avenues for young people to discuss their feelings and progress.

There is an excellent approach to promoting the physical, emotional and mental well-being of young people that reflects the skills they will require when living independently. Young people fully understand the importance of healthy lifestyles. They are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health, with support if needed. The location of the home enables young people to have very easy access to a local doctor, dentist and other professionals they may need the services of. Staff work extremely hard to ensure young people are aware of and understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle.

Young people have exceptionally good attendance at school and see it as part of their daily lives. This is comparable to their peers, and in some cases higher. Current young people's attendance levels are excellent; 97% and 100%. There is a clear expectation that young people will either attend school, college or work whilst completing the independence programme. Staff present a very positive approach to education and liaise closely with each education establishment to provide consistent education support. Young people's files contain all the necessary education information.

Young people clearly have a voice in the running of the home and in their futures. They feel they are listened to and changes are made as a result of their views, opinions and wishes. Regular informal and formal key worker sessions enable young people to build excellent relationships with dedicated members of staff and to be well informed of placement objectives and targets. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend their placement reviews and to express their views and wishes. This is achieved as a result of the excellent relationships and high levels of commitment made by the staff team.

Highly-organised and well maintained individual files contain detailed information

regarding contact arrangements and restrictions. Due to the nature of the service young people do not have contact with family members although contact is encouraged with friends. Young people stated they were happy with contact arrangements.

Young people make a positive contribution to the home and stated they are keen for other young people to follow this newly-introduced independence programme. Young people are actively involved in the local and wider community, join in local clubs and attend weekly religious institutions. This is an area the home is continually working to develop.

Young people are very well prepared for transition to independence. The home's main focus is delivering a programme that results in young people having the skills and knowledge to experience a successful transition from leaving care and moving on to independence. Extremely detailed thought, knowledge and experience has gone into developing the programme that is resulting in excellent outcomes for young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive and healthy relationships with staff who are dedicated and committed to providing the skills young people need for adult life. Relationships with key workers are professional, caring and sensitive. The staff team have high aspirations for the young people. Young people state that staff are 'brilliant' and they feel safe at the setting. The focus on independent skills enables young people to be very much the centre of the home with their views and opinions being considered to a very high standard, especially in relation to their adult life outside the care system and post 18 years of age.

Information is made available to young people so they know how and to whom they can make a complaint. Young people confirmed they know how the process works. They stated they had no complaints as they really enjoyed living at the setting and being part of the independence skills programme they have signed up to. Robust monitoring and auditing systems enable senior management to identify any area for concern or improvement.

The independence programme introduced by the setting is of a high standard. Individual placement plans are used to formulate independent life skills programmes. Young people are consistently and centrally involved in the planning and review of their care. Staff are fully committed to the independence programme young people sign up to. Staff provide high levels of support to the young people initially and less as each young person becomes more confident with the programme. Young people stated they are very happy to be at the setting learning life skills needed as adults and have a clear focus on their futures.

Strict admission criteria has meant all young people committed to the programme

have responded positively with excellent levels of behaviours seen. Feedback from placing social workers confirmed the programme is working very well for their placements. Young people are assisted to take responsibility for their own health needs. Staff will provide support to access doctors, dentists and other professionals and also health promotion as needed. The company is strong at monitoring and auditing the service and identifying the need to develop the service further in response to need. There is a clear commitment to developing practices and knowledge to further improve outcomes for young people.

Education attendance and achievement is outstanding in relation to individual ability. The setting has a high expectation of college attendance and achieves excellent levels. Staff provide exceptional support to ensure young people maintain their chosen place of education, although there is clear expectation for young people to be self motivated to attend. Young people are encouraged to participate in leisure activities outside the home. They are supported to access clubs and activities of their choice that are purposeful and enjoyable. Both young people follow a religious faith and this is fully supported by staff working with the local Imam and the mosque. This forms part of the independence programme.

Needs relating to areas, such as gender, disability, faith, sexuality and religious beliefs are identified pre-arrival to the setting and form part of individual placement and independence plans. Staff are able to address sensitive issues and provide appropriate non discriminatory support for young people. Staff treat young people with respect and dignity and this is reciprocated by the young people.

Young people live in a home that is appropriately located for its purpose of independence learning, well designed and maintained to a high standard. The house consists of a lounge, kitchen/diner, and conservatory on the ground floor. Each young person has their own bedroom with an adjacent bathroom on the first floor, where there is also a staff office and sleeping-in on-call bedroom. There is a front and rear garden.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are excellent arrangements to safeguard young people. The management of the home and practices in place protect young people while enabling them to take reasonable risks as part of their growth, development and independence. Young people stated they feel very safe and have confidence in the staff team. A main focus of the independence programme is that staff support young people in providing them with strategies to keep themselves safe when away from the home.

The home's child protection and safeguarding policy is fully understood by staff. They are very well informed of action to take if they are concerned about the welfare of young people, or if a young person makes a disclosure to them. The whole staff team undertakes training during their induction and is confident in following the

home's procedures. However, staff do not currently refresh or update their safeguarding training to ensure that their knowledge remains fully up to date.

There are clear procedures for staff to follow if a child is missing without authority. Both staff and young people confirmed there have not been any bullying issues at the home and no incidents of young people going missing.

There are no incidents of aggressive behaviours or physical interventions. The strict and robust admission criteria, together with the staffing levels on duty at each shift, does not allow for these behaviours. However, staff are also trained to intervene as necessary. Young people are supported and guided to take responsibility for their actions. They are helped to understand the consequences of their actions and what impact this would have on their immigration status and housing accommodation, when living independently in the community.

Young people live in a setting that is physically safe and appropriately secure. The home's health and safety procedures are outstanding, with all staff completing training on health and safety matters. Risk management systems are robust, well organised and maintained to high standards. Fire safety procedures are well known to staff. Young people with very regular checks taking place of fire alarms, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. External contractors regularly check the gas and electrical installations. The home has had a fire and rescue service inspection. This confirmed that the setting's fire risk assessment and fire precautions are satisfactory and conform to the Regulatory Reform Act of the Fire Safety Order 2005.

Young people are further protected by the organisation's robust recruitment procedures. All staff are carefully selected and vetted. Records show the recruitment procedures meet the recommendations and current legislation. Staff very appropriately monitor any visitors to the home and maintain a visitor's book.

Leadership and management

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

There is a clear and strong management structure in this company. This home is effectively and efficiently managed by a Registered Manager who is experienced and highly thought of by both young people and staff. The Registered Manager has been central to the development of the independence programme and his previous experience has been very influential and beneficial to the programme and in achieving excellent outcomes for young people. Staff clearly look to the Registered Manager as a role model and feel very comfortable in his management style. There are systems in place for the Registered Manager to monitor and develop practices further to enable continual improvement and improved outcomes for young people.

Communication between the manager and staff is very good with staff very well informed of all aspects of the home. The small staff team works closely together and provides consistency of care and support. The Regulation 33 monthly monitoring of the service is of a very good standard that also enables the home to reflect and

move forward. There were three requirements made at the last inspection and all have been fully addressed.

The home meets the aims and objectives in its Statement of Purpose which has recently been reviewed. It contains a wealth of information relating to the independence programme. Young people receive a children's guide in a language that is their mother tongue. They said they found very helpful as it contains information relating to the service, the independence programme and what is expected of them. Young people are happy and comfortable around the staff team and enjoy their company. The children's guide does refer to how young people can make contact with their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director.

Young people's individual needs in relation to their ethnicity and family backgrounds are considered. The Statement of Purpose comprehensively addresses equality and diversity. There is a commitment to anti-discriminatory practice and fairness to all. Relationships between staff and young people are highly professional, respectful and dignified. Staff are very well informed of individual needs relating to race, religion, sexuality, and ethnicity. There are consistent working practices which focus on enhancing young people's quality of life where young people receive support to take pride in themselves and develop a positive identity, as part of the overall care package.

Young people receive care from a staff team who are themselves highly supported and enthusiastic about their roles. The organisation demonstrates a strong commitment to staff training and achieving certificates and awards relevant to their roles. Staff feel their training needs are met and positively engage in training on offer, both internal and external. The staff have received no specific training on resettlement issues for asylum seekers.

The staffing levels have been very closely thought through and are continually monitored. All shifts have two members of staff on duty which has proved sufficient. The robust criteria for young people's placement at the setting has meant there has not been a need for additional staff; no young people have a recent history of aggressive behaviours. Risk assessments have been carried out and updated as and when a new young person arrives. Young people feel safe and comfortable in staff's presence and spoke very complimentary about them. The results are such that young people feel safe, cared for and develop trusting relationships which enables them to focus positively on their journey into a successful adult life.

Records in the home are currently handwritten; staff do not have access to a computer to write reports and key worker sessions. All documents are faxed to social workers. Social workers have made numerous suggestions that correspondence would be quicker, safer and, more importantly, legible to read if it were available on email. Information about the young people is not recorded sufficiently clearly and it is not in a way which will be helpful to the young people when they access their files.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.

