

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pete Hylton
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care for two young people, of either sex with emotional, behavioural and learning difficulties. It is owned by a private company.

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 **outstanding**.

Highly individualised care ensures that young people's individual needs, wishes and requirements are met at all times. The staff team are focused on supporting young people to achieve their full potential. Since the last inspection, there has been exceptional progress in educational achievement and attendance. This can be attributed to a staff team who are ambitious and aspirational for the young people.

Young people have highly positive views about the home and have no concerns or complaints. They feel relaxed, respected and listened to all times. Young people and staff have excellent relationships with each other. A culture of mutual respect and tolerance is evident in the home. Young people are treated as young adults and with due regard for their personal needs and preferences. Young people are encouraged to display their individuality and celebrate their heritage.

Young people have a strong sense of safety at the home and challenging behaviour is extremely rare. A well-trained and experienced staff team confidently and competently manage young people's behaviour. All areas of the home are safely maintained and regular checks ensure that the health and safety of young people is fully promoted at all times. The Registered Manager has an excellent understanding of the home's developmental needs. Robust and rigorous quality assurance processes ensure that the care provided is of a consistently high quality. Effective consultation with young people, parents, carers and placing authorities further drives improvements.

No requirements or recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress as a result of being at the home. They make progress in all areas of their lives and as a result, are developing their independence and readiness for adulthood. Challenging behaviour is extremely rare at the home and young people feel involved, settled and treated like young adults.

Young people are encouraged to develop their independence and learn how to plan and prepare meals. Furthermore, young people are supported to develop skills in maintaining a clean home, budgeting and travelling independently in the local community. This results in young people developing age appropriate skills that equip them for adulthood. A member of staff commented that 'we help young people to help themselves.' A young person commented, 'I am more independent, I am able to travel on buses around the local area.' This is further echoed by comments from other professionals, 'has made definite improvements with his independence', and 'developing a lot of new skills so that he will be ready for moving on.'

Young people have excellent attendance at education and make excellent academic progress. In some cases, there has been exceptional progress. For example, young people with unsettled educational histories have now achieved qualifications in line with their peers. This ensures that young people are able to pursue their aspirations and career ideas. A social worker commented that a young person 'is making excellent progress.'

Young people are developing their emotional maturity and making excellent progress in understanding their backgrounds and life-stories. This is underpinned by a supportive and highly caring staff team. Young people build trusting relationships with the staff and discuss their concerns, progress and achievements. This results in an environment where young people are respected and know that they are valued for who they are. Regular meetings, both individually and collectively, ensure that a culture of mutual tolerance, understanding and respect is in place at the home. Young people contribute their ideas and thoughts and are at the centre of decisions made in the home.

Young people are encouraged to socialise with their peers and make friends in the local community. As a result, they develop lasting attachments and benefit from spending time with young people with similar interests. This helps young people to develop their emotional resilience and their social networks. Where young people have close friendships with peers, they are encouraged to invite their friends to the home and for them to join in activities. This results in a home environment where young people feel they are able to take part in normal teenage activities. A member of staff commented 'there are rules and boundaries obviously, but, we work hard to make this like a normal family home.' This reflects in how settled young people feel in the home and in their excellent relationships with the staff team and each other.

Quality of care

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

The staff team have high aspirations for young people and promote a culture of achievement. The staff team work hard to motivate and engage young people with educational opportunities. A member of staff commented that 'we always try and push what can be achieved.' As a result, young people make excellent progress with their education and maintain excellent attendance. Comments from social workers include, 'very impressed with the work they are doing with the young person. They are really proactive with promoting education' and 'the staff team ensure that the young person is actively involved in education at all times.' Where young people refuse to attend educational opportunities, the staff team are proactive in supporting young people to overcome any barriers or obstacles. Excellent relationships with educational providers ensure that any concerns are appropriately shared and acted upon. This results in an atmosphere where education is valued and given high priority.

Young people are actively involved in planning their care. Young people's views, wishes and preferences are taken into full account. This is because young people and staff have excellent relationships and a culture of mutual respect and trust exists within the home. Care plans are highly personalised and respect the individuality of young people. Where young people have religious or cultural needs, these are fully catered for. For example, where young people choose to follow specific aspects of their religious observance, the staff team ensure this is fully supported. As a result, young people are able to develop their spirituality and further understand their heritage. The staff team are knowledgeable and skilled about meeting individual need. This is underpinned through effective training in equality and diversity. Furthermore, the individual skills of the staff team are fully explored. For example, where staff have linguistic skills, these are used to provide information for young people in different languages. The staff team ensure that they meet the individual needs of young people at all times.

The young person's guide is well written, up-to-date and contains all required information. This ensures that young people are aware of support services and how to contact them. A freely available telephone ensures that young people can maintain contact with their friends and family. Where young people have concerns or complaints, they are encouraged to contact the appropriate bodies. Complaints from young people are rare. Where young people express dissatisfaction with external services, the staff team ensure that support is given to young people to help them raise their concerns. The staff team effectively advocate for young people and ensure that the voice of the young person is heard at all times. This results in young people feeling valued, respected and listened to.

The views of young people are regularly sought and acted upon. Young people are the heart of how the home operates. Choice is actively promoted and young people help to choose meals, activities, items for the home and ideas for improvement. This results in young people developing a sense of ownership and belonging to the home. Furthermore, young people benefit from regular and meaningful individual

discussions with their key workers. Specific topics, such as personal safety, cultural needs, future plans and areas of concern are discussed. This ensures that young people are able to express their views and staff are able to act on these where necessary. This results in young people feeling empowered to make changes to their care. As a result, young people are supported in overcoming any difficulties.

The staff team ensure that young people maintain contact with their friends and where appropriate to do so, their families. This ensures that young people are able to develop and sustain relationships that are important to them. The staff team ensure that young people have access to a range of age appropriate activities. Furthermore, young people's friends are regularly involved in activities and outings. A young person commented 'I like it here; it's just like a normal home. It doesn't feel like a children's home.' Young people are encouraged to try different activities and broaden their hobbies and interests. A social worker commented 'the staff team are innovative in supporting the young person to try different things.'

The home is a well-presented and attractive environment. Young people enjoy relaxing in the home's communal areas and are able to personalise their bedrooms. The staff team ensure that the home is a clean, tidy and homely environment. A member of staff commented that the home is 'a safe, comfortable home and it is well looked after.' Meals provided to young people are based on choice and reflect individual tastes, preferences and cultural needs. This also supports young people with maintaining and developing healthy eating habits. All health appointments are up to date and young people are supported in maintaining their personal health. The dangers of smoking and other forms of substance use are actively promoted and young people are able to contact services of support if they so wish.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Restraint has not been used in the home since 2008. The recording system remains appropriate for use and ensures that should restraint occur, all required details can be recorded. Where sanctions are given to young people, they are fair, proportionate and appropriate to the negative behaviour. Regular and robust monitoring of sanctions records ensures that any shortfalls are identified and resolved. All appropriate details, including the views of young people, are recorded. As a result, the Registered Manager is able to review the use of sanctions and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures.

Young people feel safe at the home and incidents of challenging behaviour are extremely rare. A young person commented that 'the rules are really fair; I am very clear and know what is expected of me. I am treated like a young adult, not a child.' Positive behaviour is recognised and rewarded. A range of incentives, including verbal praise and specific rewards such as additional activities, are given where young people display socially acceptable behaviour. This ethos creates an environment where young people feel respected and understand their boundaries. As

a result, the home is calm, settled and relaxed.

The home has excellent relationships with safeguarding services and the local police. This ensures that any concerns over the welfare and safety of young people are quickly shared and appropriately responded to. A police officer commented that the 'home work really well with the young people.' Since the last inspection, there have been no serious incidents requiring notification to safeguarding services, the police or Ofsted. The frequency of young people going missing is reducing and this can be attributed to strong links with support services. All young people have robust risk management plans in place. This ensures that all young people and staff are clear on what actions are taken in the event of a young person going missing. Excellent relationships with the local police have led to bespoke management plans for young people. As a result, the staff team proactively ascertain the whereabouts of young people at all times. This has led to a reduction in episodes of young people going missing from the home. A social worker commented, 'the staff team are very proactive in managing incidents of the young person going missing. These incidents have really reduced since they have been there.'

Robust staff recruitment procedures ensure that only suitable adults come into contact with young people at the home. All required checks are made of staff wishing to work at the home. This ensures that young people are protected from adults who may wish to cause them harm. Visitors to the home are appropriately checked and chaperoned. This further ensures the safety of young people.

The Registered Manager maintains close contact with young people and seeks their views at all times. This ensures that young people can raise concerns with the management of the home, should they wish to. This is effectively underpinned through excellent organisational procedures for young people raising concerns. All staff are well-trained in how to respond to allegations or suspicions of abuse or poor practice. This results in an open and safe environment for young people.

All required checks on electrical and gas appliances are up to date and regularly reviewed. This ensures that young people live in a home environment that does not compromise their health or safety. Regular servicing of all fire detection equipment is completed by appropriately qualified individuals. Furthermore, the staff team regularly check all fire equipment to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Fire drills take place regularly, including evening times, and the Registered Manager ensures that all young people and staff take part. This results in a home that ensures that young people are safe and protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home was last inspected in February 2013 and was judged to be making satisfactory progress. Two requirements were made relating to education and activities for young people. The Registered Manager has taken appropriate actions to ensure that the requirements are fully met. Young people now benefit from a wide

range of planned leisure activities. Furthermore, all young people are engaged in appropriate educational placements and are making excellent progress. The home continues to demonstrate a capacity and desire to make further improvements.

Rigorous quality assurance processes ensure that all areas of the home are thoroughly audited. This results in a home that is well-managed and well-maintained. This is further enhanced through excellent organisational monitoring of the home. Regular visits by senior managers ensure that the quality of care is checked and where shortfalls arise, they are swiftly resolved.

The health and safety of young people is given the highest priority. Regular checks of all areas of the home ensure any defects are quickly identified and robustly addressed. This is further enhanced through members of the staff team being trained in specific health and safety tasks. For example, staff are appropriately trained in electrical equipment safety testing. As a result, where young people bring electrical items to the home, they can be quickly checked for safety and appropriateness for use. This results in no delays for young people wishing to use their items and further enhances their safety at the home.

All staff are fully up to date with their training and the organisation ensures that training is regularly refreshed where needed. A settled and stable staff team are extremely knowledgeable and highly competent in their duties. Where new staff have joined the home, thorough induction processes ensure that they are suitably trained and prepared for working in the home. This ensures that all staff are able to work towards the home's stated aims and understand the excellent systems in place to support young people. All staff understand the home's ethos and work hard together to ensure young people reach their potential. The Registered Manager ensures that all staff are regularly supervised and that areas for improvement and practice issues are discussed. A member of staff commented 'I feel really supported by the manager.' As a result, the staff team feel motivated and share the Registered Manager's vision for further improving the home.

The progress that young people make is carefully recorded and used to plan further improvements. The use of high quality monitoring and progress reports inform placing authorities, parents, carers and professionals of progress and any concerns. Regular consultation with young people, parents, carers and placing authorities ensures that the Registered Manager is able to consistently and continually review the operation of the home. This consultation drives improvement, where needed, and ensures that the home is responsive to the views, wishes and preferences of young people. A young person commented, 'it's different here, the staff listen to you and I feel like I am part of it all.'

The home's Statement of Purpose is fully updated and contains all required information. This ensures that young people, parents, carers and placing authorities are clear about the home's services. Excellent communication with partner organisations is a key strength of the home. Comments from professionals include; 'communication between the home and ourselves is excellent', 'the home work very closely with us, they are really cooperative' and 'they work really well with all

professionals.'

The Registered Manager's development plan is comprehensive, up to date and designed to further improve the home. Regular checks of the plan ensure that the staff team are on course to achieve the stated aims. Improvements since the last inspection include further staff training in specific safeguarding matters and improvements to the outside of the home. These changes have further enhanced the safety of young people and improved their home environment. The Registered Manager is extremely passionate about raising standards in the home. Regular staff meetings focus on exceeding standards and identifying areas for improvement. As a result, the staff team are energetic and ambitious to further improve the home and the services they provide to 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.