

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 privately run children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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 **adequate**.

Young people receive individualised care and support from staff that enables them to achieve some positive outcomes. Young people are cared for safely. They say that they feel safe in the home and that there is no bullying. Their health needs are met. They report that they eat healthily and that they have access to a range of activities that they enjoy; this helps to promote a healthy lifestyle. Overall, young people have positive relationships with staff. They are consulted about their care and they identify particular members of staff who they feel able to confide in.

Staff actively promote the value of education and encourage young people to attend. They regularly liaise with schools and colleges and contribute to young people's education planning meetings. Some young people attend their education placement regularly and make steady progress. However, not all young people achieve a sufficiently good level of attendance at school to ensure they can achieve to their individual potential. Young people who are of an age to need a pathway plan do not have one in place which means that there is no clear record of the preparation they making for independence and the support they will need when they leave care. Individual placement plans fully address young people's needs, but young people themselves say that they are not fully aware of the content of their placement plan.

The manager has a plan for the future of the home, which identifies how they are looking to develop the services offered to young people. There are appropriate management monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that there is good oversight of the welfare of young people. The home has a staff training programme, but not all staff have had training in some key areas of their work, such as safeguarding and the administration of medicines. The home now has a permanent manager who provides effective leadership. However, the manager has not yet

completed the process of registration with Ofsted.

Young people benefit from living in a home that is kept safe and is generally well maintained. However some parts of the home would benefit from some redecoration and repair.

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 young people attend school, college or alternative provision regularly (NMS 8.3)
- ensure that all areas of the home are well maintained (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that young people who are preparing to leave care have a pathway plan in place (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose is up to date, specifically with regard to the details of the manager(NMS 13.1)
- ensure that all staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of young people (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that all young people understand the purpose and content of their placement plan. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The individualised care that young people are given by staff supports them in making progress in their life. For example, they enjoy good health. One young person said 'I'm really healthy. I always eat well and I like to play football and go running.' Young people report that they are well looked after if they are ill and they have routine health checks to ensure that their health needs are identified and met.

Young people benefit emotionally from the support they are given to gain a clear understanding of their background and history and why they came into care. They also benefit from planned contact with family and friends. This enables them to keep in touch with people who are important to them and to develop and maintain their sense of identity. Young people take part in activities in their local community such as joining a football team and a running club. Involvement in these activities helps to develop their self-esteem as well as promoting friendships.

Some young people have made steady progress at school and have moved on into further education at college where they have continued to achieve. However, this is

not the case for some young people in the home whose poor levels of attendance at school have limited their educational attainment.

Although staff encourage young people to develop their life skills in the home, some young people report that they feel that they are not given enough support to prepare for independence. Young people of an appropriate age do not have a pathway plan that identifies how they are being supported to acquire the skills they need for adult life. This also means there is no clear plan of the ongoing support young people will need when they leave care.

Quality of care

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

Young people are cared for in line with their overall care plans and the individual placement plans that are developed in the home. These are detailed and address all aspects of young people's needs. They are written in a style that is appropriate for young people. Although staff report that plans are fully discussed and agreed with young people, they are not all signed by young people to confirm this. Some young people reported that they did not fully understand the detail of their plans.

Young people generally enjoy positive relationships with staff and they comment that they get on well with one another. They understand how to make a complaint and they were able to identify specific staff who they feel able to talk to. Young people report that there is no bullying in the home.

There are regular opportunities for young people to make their views known so they can be involved in the decisions that are made about their life. Placing social workers report that staff communicate well with them and contribute fully to young people's reviews and planning meetings. They feel that young people are well looked after and make progress in the home.

The home has good links with health care providers, such as the looked after children's nurse and adolescent mental health services. Staff also have the benefit of regular consultation with a play therapist who is contracted to work with the organisation. These arrangements ensure that young people have access to resources they need to promote their emotional and physical well-being. The arrangements for the storage of medicines are appropriate and support young people's health.

Staff actively promote the value of education and they are keen for young people to achieve. They contribute to young people's education planning meetings and support young people at college every day. If young people struggle to attend school regularly, they provide incentives to young people to promote attendance. Teachers confirm that staff communicate very well with them and encourage young people to attend regularly. However the work that staff do with young people has not always resulted in improved levels of attendance at school. This in turn has impacted on the progress that young people are able to make.

Professionals involved with the home say that staff manage young people's behaviour well. Staff promote and reward positive behaviour and young people generally respond appropriately to the boundaries that staff put in place for them. As a result, young people's behaviour generally improves over time.

Young people live in a home that is appropriately located which enables them to have good access to local facilities. Young people report that they like their rooms and can personalise them. The home is generally well maintained, but there are some areas that require some attention, in particular the carpet in the hall is damaged and there is some damage to one wall, as well as some areas that need redecoration. This detracts from the overall positive presentation of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are good arrangements to ensure that young people are protected from harm. Young people report that they feel safe in the home and placing social workers confirm that they are cared for safely. Staff have a good understanding of the home's safeguarding procedure and consequently they know how to report and manage any concerns in order to keep young people safe.

Detailed individual risk assessments address young people's particular vulnerabilities and record the strategies that staff put in place to support them. Individual behaviour management plans are also put in place for young people. These clearly identify specific triggers and the actions staff should take to reduce the likelihood of harm. All risk assessments and behaviour management plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are up to date and continue to reflect young people's needs. Restraint is only ever used as a last resort when it is necessary to protect young people or staff; no young people have been restrained since the last inspection. Appropriate records are kept of all incidents that result in a physical intervention. These include de-brief sessions for young people which enable them to reflect on what has happened and record their views. The manager checks all records to monitor the practice of staff and ensure that the welfare of young people is promoted.

The home has a robust missing from home protocol. The manager maintains good liaison with the local police and placing authorities. This promotes good partnership working which in turn protects young people. As they settle into the home, the frequency with which young people go missing reduces and there have been very few such incidents since the last inspection. Any that occur are managed and reported appropriately to promote the prompt and safe return of young people to the home.

Young people are protected by effective arrangements for checking staff and visitors. These ensure that all staff are vetted and assessed as suitable before they start work and that visitors are checked before they are allowed into the home.

Young people benefit from living in a safe environment. Staff make sure that the home is kept safe by doing regular health and safety checks and making sure that equipment is serviced. They also practise the home's evacuation procedure with young people so that they know what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The majority of the requirements made at the last inspection are fully met. The organisation has notified Ofsted that the previous manager has left the home and has appointed a permanent manager who is in the process of applying to become registered with Ofsted. One requirement about staff training that was made at the last inspection is partly met. A recommendation has been made at this visit. The actions that the organisation has taken to meet the requirements shows their commitment to improving the service for young people and to ensuring that the home meets the regulations.

Young people live in a home that is appropriately staffed and managed effectively. Staff report that they have regular supervision which enables them to discuss their care of young people and their training needs. They feel that they are well supported by their manager. Staff say that generally training opportunities within the organisation are good and that this enables them to develop the skills they need for their work. However, not all staff have had training in the safe administration of medicines and one newly appointed member of staff has not yet had safeguarding training. This means that some staff are caring for young people without the necessary skills or information in some areas of their work. All staff are expected to be qualified to an appropriate level and the organisation gives staff support to ensure that this is achieved. The majority of staff have completed a relevant qualification and newer staff are working towards it.

The Statement of Purpose describes how the home works and how young people are cared for. The home fulfils its stated aims and objectives. However, the current Statement of Purpose is not up to date as it still shows the name of the previous manager who has not been at the home for some months. The young person's guide to the service gives them clear information about the home. Young people confirm that they have been given a copy of this guide.

Information that is held about young people is stored securely to protect confidentiality. Records are clear and kept up to date. Young people are encouraged to read their files and contribute their views to documents that are kept.

There are effective systems in place for monitoring the work of the home to ensure that the welfare of young people is promoted. These include the manager's monthly checks as well as those undertaken by a more senior manager in the organisation. The views of young people, families and care staff are regularly sought as part of

this process. This gives them the opportunity to make comments about the quality of care. Shortfalls that are identified during the monitoring process are addressed to drive forward improvements in the home. Copies of the reports of these visits are sent to Ofsted within the required timescales. Notifications of all significant incidents are also sent to relevant authorities within the required timescales. These documents confirm that the manager and staff take appropriate action to keep young people safe. The manager has produced a plan detailing how the home is looking to develop in order to continue to improve the quality of care that is given 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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.