

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 thrive and make good progress while staying at this service. Their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are effectively supported and significantly improved. The provision is particularly resourceful in managing a clear framework for behaviour and understanding the individual communication processes of young people. Young people say they are calmer and have better ways to think things through so they do not have so many outbursts.

Promoting equality and diversity is an outstanding feature of this service. An in-depth understanding of each young person's individuality leads to positive outcomes for young people. They are treated with a high level of respect and empowered to make their wishes, feelings and views heard and included in their placements and the running of the service.

Safeguarding is given the highest priority, resulting in a significant decrease in risk taking behaviours by young people. There are strong and organised communication processes, including excellent inter-agency liaison. Parents' comments include, 'communication is excellent' and, 'there are stronger strategies and I could see progress straight away'.

Young people grow in self-esteem and clearly develop clearer concepts of appropriate adolescent behaviours and relationships with adults. Staff are dedicated and knowledgeable. They make concerted efforts to remove obstacles that may limit young people and ensure they reach their educational and social potential. Positive outcomes are facilitated with excellent relationships between staff and young people's families. Parents comments include, 'I am now confident my child is getting

what they need to support and keep them in mainstream school' and, 'staff always ring me and I always attend the core group meetings with the manager'.

Young people consistently attend and most do well at school. They feel positive about their progress and value their educational achievements. Some young people have specific educational and behavioural challenges and they are encouraged to explore their interests and link these to education and employment opportunities.

Monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance to maintain good standards and further develop improvements in the running of the service. While quality of care is good, the staff team is asked to explore further strategies to develop independence strategies and address some minor recording shortfalls in terms of medication and clothing records. There are two recommendations and one statutory requirement set as a result of this inspection.

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
29 (2001)	maintain a record of all accounts kept in the children's home. For example, for young people's clothing accounts. (Regulation 29, Schedule 4(9))	28/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- provide a written record of all medication given to children during their placement. This is with particular regard to individual medication records and in addition to the central daily log book (NMS 6.15)
- explore ways the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for "eligible" care leavers. This is with particular regard to young people who have additional needs in terms of levels of understanding about independence preparation. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in this service. They grow up and develop in a nurturing, secure and structured environment. Young people thrive and develop due to excellent behaviour management and robust safeguarding.

Young people with complex behaviours and difficulties grow in self-confidence. They develop and enjoy meaningful social relationships and engage in a variety of educational and social opportunities. Young people value their improvements in behaviour and how this impacts on their positive relationships with staff and family members. Parents, social workers and other professionals are extremely confident and complimentary about the positive outcomes and progress made by young people. They identify developments in taking personal responsibility for behaviour, being able to verbalise emotions, education and staying safe. Young people become increasingly empowered to take more responsibility for their behaviours and futures.

Young people develop a strong sense of self-worth because they are treated with respect. Young people are given excellent opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and behaviours. They live in an environment that proactively identifies, develops and celebrates difference. For example, young people are able to understand how best to express and manage traits relating to Asperger's syndrome and develop a strong sense of gender and personal safety.

Young people are proud of themselves, their achievements and changes in their behaviour. They appreciate the support they receive from staff to attend and do well in education. Young people confidently talk about their learning, hobbies, future education and employment. They demonstrated these positive outcomes by enthusiastically reading their school reports. Parents are particularly appreciative and positive that partnership working results in maintained mainstream education placements for some young people.

Young people are encouraged to feel good about themselves because they value and internalise the consistent reward and celebration of their achievements. Young people earn rewards as part of their behaviour and education programmes. They also value the time to talk to their key workers, care staff, teachers and other support workers. Young people are empowered to have an impact on their futures. They are fully involved in their placement plans, attending meetings and are listened to when they make complaints. Young people are encouraged to invest in the running of the house. They use weekly house meetings to discuss menus, put forward ideas to improve the home and plan activities for the week ahead. They enjoy a range of activities including horse riding, bowling, playing a variety of sports and trips to the beach.

Young people are encouraged to understand and take more responsibility for their medical and health needs; including developing an understanding about the importance of taking medication. They enjoy improved physical and emotional health because of staff support and access to a range of health agencies. Young people's emotional health improves because they are supported with ways to talk through difficulties, become less anxious and better manage their anger. They lead healthier lifestyles including healthy eating, exercise and improved personal hygiene.

Quality of care

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

Young people are consistently cared for and thrive because there are effective frameworks for care, education support and behaviour management. They are looked after by a competent and well trained staff team. Care and education planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Young people make progress because there are good communication and review processes with consistent involvement of the young people and parents. Young people develop in maturity due to a clear focus by all staff to develop engaging and meaningful relationships with the young people. Staff liaise with parents, social workers and external agencies in accordance with young people's care plans to meet their complex needs. Improved outcomes demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of young people at the service.

Young people are supported by staff who have a good understanding of equality and diversity, including gender, disability and young people's social, economic and cultural backgrounds. All young people are able to contribute and progress because staff promote meaningful communication strategies for young people, including those with learning difficulties. Staff provide an environment where young people can express themselves and develop a sensitive awareness and tolerance of each other's needs and identity.

Education is supported with individual plans and close working relationships with schools and parents. The routines in the house, including bedtimes, getting up, mealtimes and expectations regarding homework and staffing levels, are arranged in order to promote young people's education. Staffing levels also ensure young people enjoy and pursue a variety of interests, activities and leisure opportunities. Hobbies and interests have a positive impact on young people. They are currently motivated to pursue potential employment opportunities in horse care and the music industry, as a result of opportunities facilitated by the home.

Young people have opportunities to develop independence skills. They take responsibility for domestic tasks and earn independent free time as their placements progress. However, some young people require independence programmes that respond to their specific levels of understanding. Current independence preparation processes lack some level of pragmatism necessary to meaningfully meet the complex needs of some young people.

Physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored. They are supported with detailed and individualised healthcare plans. Staff liaise well with appropriate health and advice agencies. They demonstrate effective knowledge of health issues relating to young people's diverse and varied backgrounds and lifestyle choices. Healthy eating and exercise is promoted. Staff provide input and support to ensure menus that take into account young people's choices are also balanced and healthy.

Young people's health is supported and protected with written procedures and staff training in the storage and administration of medication. Staff are keen to explore different ways to safely administer medication; for example in liquid form. However, this method presents additional difficulties in terms of measuring and monitoring the medication procedures. All medication is recorded, but one record was made in the daily log book and not in the young people's individual medication record.

Communication processes are good and enable young people to express their views, wishes and feelings. Regular house meetings and key working contact are integral to making sure young people are involved in the running of the home and their placements. Young people know about and regularly use the complaints' processes because information is displayed in the house and is contained in the young people's guide.

The house is well maintained and further improved with on-going redecoration and refurbishment. There are clear efforts to make the house comfortable and homely. There are good levels of privacy for young people; they have their own bedroom key and privacy lock for the bathroom.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are exceptional improvements in the safeguarding outcomes for all young people staying at this home. Levels of safety are outstanding because staff consistently implement the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. Young people's social workers and parents express a clear confidence in the home's ability to manage risk taking activities and improve behaviour.

Safeguarding strategies are appropriate to the significant vulnerabilities and levels of danger presented by the young people living at this home. Young people are protected because the manager is proactive in establishing links and working partnerships with parents and agencies. Staff maintain effective links with the police, the local safeguarding children's team, schools and parents. Protective strategies focus on robust risk assessment resulting in effective levels of supervision of young people both inside and outside the home. Staffing levels are allocated to ensure that all are supervised, kept safe and receive appropriate support. Young people receive a consistent and dedicated response from staff resulting in significant changes in behaviour. There are excellent strategies to monitor risk taking activities and young people going missing from care.

Behaviour management is a key strength. Young people's behaviour improves because staff have an excellent knowledge of how young people's experiences and learning difficulties influence behaviour. Risk assessments effectively link to individual behaviour plans. Staff take time to understand the background of each young person; they work closely with parents and therefore make behaviour plans and

expectations practical and meaningful. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. There has been a decrease in incidents resulting in physical interventions over recent months. Young people clearly respond to the strong boundaries, clear communication and emphasis on building trusting relationships. Young people's comments and their records show that the sanctions used when things do not go so well for them are fair. They are also motivated by the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour.

Young people have no concerns about bullying. Records show that some complex dynamics resulting from the individual needs of young people are well-managed. Young people, on occasion, effectively use the complaints process. They are confident that staff will manage their concerns. There is a strong emphasis on talking through the impact of individual attitudes and behaviour in individual key working sessions.

Young people are protected with robust recruitment processes, including checks on agency staff who come to work at the home. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping young people safe. Staff are well trained in child protection, behaviour management and health and safety. Young people live in a safe environment and they know what to do in the event of a fire. They are safe because health and safety checks are an integral part of the daily running of the home.

Leadership and management

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

This service has addressed the recommendation from the previous interim inspection by maintaining a central record of recruitment checks for all staff working in the home. Young people make good progress because the service is effective in providing them with a stable, safe and nurturing environment. Staffing levels are managed in keeping with the service's Statement of Purpose and the very specific needs of the young people.

The care framework is implemented by competent staff with good knowledge of the clear and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. Staff are supported to provide consistent boundaries, with a balanced and consistent focus on reward. There is a celebration of individuality and a dedicated response to understanding and facilitating diversity. The manager and staff have a good knowledge of the legal framework and safeguarding procedures. Young people are appropriately cared for because management systems are established and robust. Procedurally, the service is very sound. Records are generally clear and accountable, but accounts for young people's clothing were not consistently available.

Young people, staff, parents and professionals all gave positive comments about the manager's leadership and child-centred approach. Effective staff support and clear monitoring processes give clarity to the running of the home. Consistent and regular

supervision provide staff with good opportunities to formally discuss their role, professional development and the impact on working with young people with complex needs. Staff receive timely induction and they value the regular and comprehensive training programme available in the home.

Young people's care is responsive to their needs because trends and patterns in behaviour and outcomes are used to address improvement. Excellent working in partnership and consultation with parents, social workers and other agencies results in consistent care. Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. This service is proactive in exploring avenues for further improvement and overcoming obstacles and difficulties for young people to achieve their full potential.

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.