

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is a detached property situated in a residential area. It is the only children's home owned by a private provider. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation to four children with emotional and/or 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 **outstanding**.

Young people make excellent progress in relation to their starting points both socially and educationally. They thrive in a nurturing, supportive environment underpinned with clear and consistent boundaries, which is a strong feature of the home. Individual needs are identified with plans and strategies put into place to address them. All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised.

Staff seek young people's views about all aspects of the care, listen to young people's opinions and suggestions and fully take them into account. Young people's needs and views are central to the running of the home. Young people are fully involved in the decisions affecting their lives and they actively influence the running of the home.

Young people feel safe and are protected from significant harm. Feedback from young people shows that they are positive about the quality of care and the support they receive from the staff. This reflects the strong and positive relationships and trust that exist between young people and their carers and the constructive ways they tackle any difficulties.

Feedback from other stakeholders including social workers, independent reviewing officers, education support and commissioners is consistently very positive and all say they would recommend this home to other local authorities.

Feedback from the young people during the inspection was limited as some were reluctant to engage in the inspection; however the survey responses were very

positive. Others said that the home was 'a safe place to live' that 'staff help with my education' and 'the house is peaceful and structured ... staff are nice ... there is no bullying mostly we get on with each other' the home is 'a bit dull, not the atmosphere it's just plain colours' (referring to décor in the communal areas) but that 'you can choose what you have in your bedroom' and 'I like being here but would prefer to live at home. Issues were raised about the menu, which does incorporate individual choices and the décor with the assistant manager of the home.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home's philosophy and working practices are designed to assist young people to settle quickly into the home. This encourages them towards respite from a chaotic lifestyle some young people have had prior to admission. Young people benefit from the highly individualised support provided which allows them to refocus and make more positive decisions about their own futures. Young people placed are experiencing positive outcomes in their lives. Examples of this include attending education, crime reduction and young people being frequently missing which has also significantly reduced. It is possible to chart considerable progress for each young person currently living in the home throughout the comprehensive records maintained and the positive attachments between staff and young people.

The health of young people is promoted positively. All are appropriately registered to the full range of health services available to them. A number have access to more specialised services such as psychological and mental health services. Health plans form part of the planning documentation and are updated regularly. Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for their own health; they have access to specialised services that regularly visit the home and discuss any risk taking behaviours. Menus offered include individual preferences, healthy options and offer a balanced nutritional diet to young people.

Young people engage in a range of educational opportunities, tailored to their individual needs. Young people, who are reluctant to engage with formal education, benefit from staff who constantly monitor the situation to identify blocks to progress. Staff collaborate well with social workers, families, the young people and their education providers, to construct and review creative plans that support improvements in educational outcomes for young people. This ensures young people progress to the best of their ability, and overcome patterns of behaviour that have previously prevented learning and development.

All young people have contact with family, friends and other appropriate adults, which staff are skilled in helping to maintain when difficulties, problems and rejection arise. By doing so, young people and their families are given a clear message that staff will support and look to overturn barriers that may prevent improved contact to taking place.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with staff and with each other, and behave appropriately. Some young people have experienced previous placement breakdowns and have had little recent positive experience of education. The immediate aim following admission is to stabilise young people by developing positive relationships, trust and attachments with them, whilst providing clear, recognisable, consistent boundaries to operate in. This is a notable area of strength.

Young people understand how to make a complaint and are provided with written information. The children's guide is provided on admission and contains details about their rights, along with the contact details of a range of independent organisations and bodies that champion the rights of young people.

Staff are skilled in positively engaging young people, who benefit and thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. Individual needs are clearly identified to form the basis of the comprehensive care planning systems that are in place. This includes identity, religious and cultural needs. Consistent monitoring and the updating of plans and strategies takes place regularly, with evidence available to show that staff, young people, their social worker and where appropriate, parents are aware of and agree with the changes made.

Young people benefit from making a positive contribution to their home and their care plans through a variety of forums such as key worker sessions, young people's meetings, placement planning and statutory reviews. They also have the opportunity through regular discussion about routine and day to day matters.

The home provides a healthy environment where young people are able to access all of the services and support they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological health needs.

Safeguarding children and young people

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Young people confirm that they are safe, they are protected from harm and their welfare is central the practice in the home. Staff are alert and identify any incidence of bullying, they intervene quickly to address the situation. Staff challenge young people to explore issues, for example, of race or sexuality; young people are clear that they should not use negative or demeaning language and of the consequences of associated behaviours. This ensures young people live in a home where they can

express themselves as individuals, and improve their tolerance towards others.

Staff maintain a very active oversight of the welfare of young people and have developed relationships with local police to reduce risks and address unsafe behaviour. When young people are absent from the home or missing, steps are taken to ensure their safety, and staff try to understand the triggers for their behaviour. Notably young people's episodes of being missing have significantly reduced since their admission to the home. This has been through clear risk assessment and management of the associated risks and strategy meetings with all associated partnerships to ensure the welfare of young people. Young people's care plans and risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing and their vulnerability should they do so. Staff work intensively with young people to reduce incidents occurring. The local Police co-ordinator gave some excellent feedback about the home's operating procedures and systems about the management of any absences.

Staff are very clear about how to respond and report any matters of concern. They receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a full understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take, if an incident arises.

Positive behaviour is promoted young people have behaviour pledges and incentives to reinforce positive behaviours. Staff work consistently with young people to assist them to make positive choices and this works extremely well. Staff are trained in restraint the use of restraint in this home is very low despite some very challenging behaviour; this demonstrates the home's commitment to try and assist young people to manage their own behaviours to good effect.

Staff recruitment is very robust they are carefully selected and vetted, and there is monitoring visitors to help prevent unsuitable people from being recruited and having the opportunity to harm young people or place them at risk. No new staff have been appointed since the time of the last inspection. Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced and stable staff team.

The home is appropriately located it is safe and secure from unauthorised access. The home maintains risk assessments and all maintenance checks are completed regularly; no hazards were identified during this inspection.

Leadership and management

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

The management and organisation of the home is outstanding and the management team understand the strengths and areas for future development of the home. There is a very competent and experienced registered manager to the home who along with the effective assistant manager are committed and dedicated to improving outcomes for young people. There is strong evidence from previous inspections about the home's capacity for continuous improvement and the comprehensive development plan clearly outlines areas for further improvement within the service.

The young people benefit from a committed, energetic staff group who are supportive of the management team and all work together in a team centred approach that puts the needs of young people first. The ethos and working practices of the unit meets the aims and objectives set out in the Statement of Purpose.

At the time of the last inspection there was one statutory requirement to ensure that Ofsted are notified of any significant events; this has been met and the home regularly updates Ofsted on the progress of any notifications. In addition there were two recommendations; one in relation to ensuring young people have their comments recorded in the behaviour management records to obtain their views on disciplinary measures; the home regularly obtains the young people's views in these records and many other records maintained by the home. The other recommendation was that the manager monitors these records for their effectiveness; this has also been addressed and records are thoroughly monitored. No requirements or recommendations have been issued as a result of this inspection visit.

The Regulation 33 visitor to the home provides detailed reports that highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the home. In order to improve evaluation of the service, regular consultation with young people who use the service will provide invaluable insights to assist in the long-term development of the service.

The manager regularly reviews and evaluates the service according to Regulation 34 requirements. Staff who promote open and transparent relationships value and use contributions from young people. Feedback gained through regular young person's meetings, and one-to-one sessions with the manager or key workers is evident in changes made to resources and systems that reflect their expressed wishes.

All records are clear, comprehensive and up to date. Daily journals are maintained for the young people, they are person centred and child focussed. Records are also stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the individual young people's life, experiences and plans for the future.

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.