

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Valerie Shephard
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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**.

This home provides exceptionally high quality care to young people who as a result feel safe and secure. The home is spacious, comfortable and provides a homely environment which serves to enhance young people's living experience and sense of safety.

Young people make excellent progress in all areas of their development as a result of the exceptional support provided by staff. The home benefits from a very committed staff team who know the young people really well. Once they settle, young people begin to develop trusting relationships with staff which assists them to address their attitude and behaviour. A young person commented, 'staff are very good at making sure kids get the best out of everything.'

There is extensive and fruitful consultation with young people to capture their views to inform service delivery. Young people's views and opinions are central to the home's operations. Placement plans are highly personalised and fully recognise young people's diverse needs. These actions ensure young people are at the centre of the home's operations.

Feedback from professionals who work in partnership with the home are consistently very positive. A social worker made the following comment, 'overall, I am very happy with the home. No other placement has been able to keep this young person. The staff have worked really well to develop a relationship with her and she clearly understands that this place is safe. There is excellent liaison with police, family and the social worker. I am very impressed with the home and thankful for the amount of

effort they put into this young person.'

Some young people chose not to engage in productive discussion with the inspector; but comments from the surveys were overall very positive. One example given was, 'I love it in the home, like the staff, like the food, nothing is wrong. I like it all.' It wasn't possible to speak to any parents during the inspection. However, survey responses included the following comments, 'the support given to my child is to be applauded; the home really does seem to have my child's best interests at heart and there is excellent communication between home and parent.'

Leadership in the home is extremely strong with the manager and deputy working very closely together. They possess a strong vision for the home and a commitment to sustaining improvements for the benefit of the young people. Experienced and well qualified staff support the management team.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure to notify within 24 hours the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30. (NMS 24.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people achieve excellent outcomes appropriate with the length of time they have lived in the home. Young people benefit from living in a healthy environment supported by a well-balanced diet and opportunities for exercise. Young people fully contribute to their weekly menus and participate in preparing and cooking food. They fully understand the importance of vegetables and fruit in their diet to sustain good health. There are well established links with primary health services which support young people to achieve optimum health. Some young people engage successfully with child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) to address their emotional and psychological health needs. Once they settle, young people typically reduce their smoking intake with support from staff and a local smoking cessation programme. This has a positive effect on their overall health in the short and long term.

Some young people make extremely good progress in their education compared to their situation at the time of admission. Attendance is exceptional at 100% in respect of some young people which contrasts markedly with their pattern prior to admission. Young people have dreams and ambitions for their futures, for example wishing to become a joiner. In some cases, young people have completely ceased previous criminal activity. They have chosen instead to concentrate their efforts on attending their work experience in the community.

Young people have opportunities to participate in a range of activities such as football, swimming, gym and youth club. Some young people are interested in arts and crafts such as pottery, painting and sewing. There are examples of young people's creations throughout the home. Young people also enjoy baking and cooking. These interests assist young people to gain useful skills, confidence in their abilities which has a positive effect on their self-esteem.

Young people maintain contact with their families and people of significance to them. Staff are proactive in promoting contact for young people where this has previously been very limited or non-existent. For example, some young people are now seeing significant members of their family on at least a weekly basis. This has the effect of assisting them with their sense of belonging and development of identity. One young person on transition commented, 'the home helped me find my family and enabled me to meet my grandparent.'

Young people acquire independence skills suited to their age and level of ability. With encouragement, young people keep their rooms tidy, sort out their washing, prepare meals and learn to use public transport. Pathway plans are in place for those young people who are moving toward independence. This ensures they are prepared for independent living and future adulthood.

Quality of care

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

The home provides exceptionally good quality care to young people which assist them to develop positive and trusting relationships with staff. A parent commented, 'I think all staff are brilliant, they are patient with the young people and deal with them with total professionalism.' A social worker said, 'working with this home has been very positive. They have been able to provide a consistent and stable environment and have considered young people's needs when matching other placements.'

Staff use a range of methods to effectively consult with young people about their care. These include questionnaires, review forms and keyworker sessions. Effective consultation ensures that young people's views are taken account of in care delivery. Some examples include young people's input into refurbishing their bedrooms and their views on changing arrangements in relation to contact. Consultation serves to ensure that young people are central to the home's operations.

Staff adopt an exceedingly positive approach to education and this is a strength in the home. Staff strive to ensure young people attend their education regularly to enable them to achieve to their best of their abilities. There is full participation in young people's educational reviews and a commitment to working in partnership with educational professionals. Staff are tenacious in relation to challenging placing authorities and education providers where there are shortfalls in services. For young people who have left school, staff promote involvement in preparation for work

courses or work experience placements.

Staff fully support young people to take good care of their health and keep all relevant appointments with health professionals. There are active links with the looked after children's nurse who provides holistic health support to young people. Sexual health advice helps young people learn about changes in their bodies and addresses adolescent issues such as relationships. These measures serve to support young people health needs on their journey through adolescence.

The home is well situated enabling access to a range of activities in the community. The activities available support good physical health as well as providing opportunities for socialisation and enjoyment. Where young people refuse to engage in activities, staff persevere in encouraging their involvement in home based interests. For example some young people are learning creative handicrafts from staff members such as arts and crafts, sewing and knitting.

The home is located in a very pleasant area, situated some distance from the closest neighbours providing privacy for young people. Public transport is accessible enabling young people to travel around in accordance with their independence plans. Standards within the home are exceptionally high. The home is well organised, clean and tidy and exceedingly well maintained. The provision of good quality furniture and furnishings creates a comfortable and homely environment. Ornaments and photographs are in evidence, which add to the homely feel.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they love living in this home and confirm that they feel safe. One young person said, 'I feel safe, there are no restraints and I am not worried about making a complaint.' There has been bullying recently, however this has been dealt with effectively and staff remain vigilant to any signs of recurrence.

Risk management plans are subject to regular review and enable young people to take reasonable risks as part of normal development. For example, young people quickly move from close supervision to achieving time alone out in the community. This serves to give them confidence in their abilities and enhances the development of trust with staff.

Staff focus on positive behaviour management strategies in an attempt to address young people's behaviour through nurturing their self-esteem. Staff constantly look for opportunities to praise young people for their attitude or behaviour. Sometimes this presents a challenge, but staff persevere in their efforts to reflect positive messages back to the young people. Staff are creative in the way they support and praise young people's efforts. For example, they give small gifts to young people in recognition of positive behaviour. Young people's weekly plans identify targets for them to achieve such as attending their education or keeping their rooms tidy. These

incentives encourage young people to work towards their targets and in the process learn about cause and effect.

Staff rarely need to restrain young people. Staff approach difficult situations by backing off and giving the young person time and space to calm down. For example, if a young person is causing damage in the home, staff ensure everyone is safe and then withdraw. Staff deal with the matter later as generally young people are able to reflect on their actions once the situation is calm. Discussion with young people after the event enables them to participate in appropriate sanction or reparation.

Effective child protection training means that staff understand the protocols to follow in the event of any concerns about young people. Young people's risk assessments address their potential to go missing from home and any other vulnerability associated with going missing. The home has excellent relationships with the police. The missing from home co-ordinator said, 'the home manages the young people exceptionally well, the best of any home I have had contact with. The staff have good knowledge about child sexual exploitation and there is effective partnership working for those at high risk of this.'

The home provides a very safe environment for young people to live in. There is free access around the home and gardens which serves to enhance the homely feel of the building. All necessary checks on equipment are undertaken at regular intervals to ensure there are no avoidable hazards which could put young people at risk.

Leadership and management

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

The management team provides outstanding leadership in the home and creates a positive and safe environment for young people and staff. The Registered Manager and deputy are both experienced, and committed to providing high standards of care. A highly motivated, well qualified and experienced staff team support the managers to run the home effectively. The staff are complimentary about the home's shift system which is beneficial to both young people and staff. This is due to the provision of continuity of staff for young people and a work-life balance for staff.

At the last inspection, two requirements and three recommendations were made; the manager has addressed these. In relation to regulation 33 reports, these now record where interviews with young people and other relevant individuals have taken place. They also include a review of missing person's reports. Regarding disciplinary measures, the records include the behaviour leading to the measure and more details of young people's views. Pathway plans are now in place for 'eligible' young people to ensure they are on target to achieve skills necessary for independent living.

Young people are at the centre of care practice and extensive consultation with them informs care delivery and drives improvement forward. The manager is effective in her monitoring of the home's operations. She deals with any actions arising as a

result of the independent regulation 33 visitor reports. There is a comprehensive overview and evaluation of records relating to missing from home and disciplinary measures. This helps to determine where improvement in outcomes can be achieved for young people. Although the manager notifies the regulatory body of significant events, there is sometimes a delay while awaiting all information. A recommendation is made for the manager to notify Ofsted within 24 hours of any significant events in accordance with regulations. The submission of an update report later will ensure the regulator maintains an overview of significant events occurring in the home.

The home has strong and well established relationships with placing authorities, community health services, education providers and the police. There have been no complaints about the home since the last inspection.

The staff team are well qualified and experienced with all members holding at least a recognised diploma in child care. Staff benefit from a comprehensive range of training which ensures their skills are kept up to date. Regular supervision is provided to staff which supports them to continue to provide high quality care to young people.

The home operates in accordance with the Statement of Purpose which is subject to regular review and update. The home's development plan includes realistic targets which set out the home's aims and objectives for the year. There is evidence that the home is on track to achieve the targets set. Some of the developments include staff members holding specialist roles within the home and newly amended feedback sheets for young people. These developments ensure continual improvement in the home for the benefit of 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.