

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned by a large private organisation and provides long term placements on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people who may have emotional and 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 **good**.

Young people in this home make significant progress in all areas of their lives. The staff team are passionate and committed in their approach to securing positive outcomes for every individual. Young people feel genuinely valued and cared about. A previous resident said: 'It's a new start for every kid that comes through the door here. The staff give all children opportunities to make the right choices in life. They don't judge you. When I first came, I was really bad, but they stuck with me. The staff all really care, they don't see it as just a job.'

The relationships between staff and young people are of extremely high quality, based on trust, warmth, consistency, high expectations and aspirations. Professionals working closely with the home reflect that there is an extremely good balance of nurture and boundaries. This provides the security that young people need in order to thrive. The home is extremely young person focused.

There is an acute understanding of the importance of individuals fully contributing to their care planning. Staff show a strong commitment to promoting equality for all young people, advocating on their behalf as a good parent would. Staff are sensitive to the nuances of living in a rural environment. Consequently, they understand the importance of keeping young people in touch with their culture and sub culture. The management team understand the strengths of the home and work hard to address areas for development.

The only shortfall identified is the maintenance of the home. The manager has gone

some way to address this. However, the current programme of works do not include all areas that need addressing.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally and are kept reasonably decorated and maintained. (Regulation 31 (2)(d)(e))	22/06/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make exceptional progress in developing their confidence, self-esteem and emotional resilience. Staff work hard to understand the trauma that individuals have experienced and how this manifests itself in behaviour. Staff use their skills and knowledge to interrupt established patterns of behaviour and triggers which stunt emotional growth. Staff use strategies to help young people feel physically and emotionally supported and safe. This gives young people the safety and security they need to explore and understand their own backgrounds.

Young people take responsibility for their own health. This is age appropriate and takes into account levels of cognitive development and understanding. Examples range from routinely wearing glasses or hearing aids to independently attending sexual health clinics and engaging with mental health services. The home engages with a range of professionals who offer specialist health involvement. One professional said 'the home works really closely with me regarding the young person's psychological well being. The progress he has made, given his complex needs, has been much better than predicted.'

Staff in the home have consistently high aspirations for all young people in their care. The progress they have made educationally has been outstanding. School staff

report a change from low attendance to 100% attendance for young people as a result of their placement in the home. Additionally, they say, 'young people arrive at school ready to learn. They have become confident in contributing to lessons and taking an active part.' A previous resident said, 'at times I did not want to get up and go to school, but the staff made sure I went. I left school with qualifications, I am at college and I have a part time job.'

Staff work closely with families of young people, to support, establish and maintain high quality contact. Family and friends of young people, and others who are significant to them, are welcomed into the home. Contact plans give structure and boundaries where needed, helping everyone to gain maximum enjoyment from each experience.

Young people in this home have reduced their risk taking behaviours. A social worker said, 'he used to take cannabis but this has stopped.' Young people who take risks that pose a danger to their health, are given information and support to make positive choices. Staff take time to understand why young people indulge in risk taking behaviour and help them to address the root of the issue.

Quality of care

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

Young people develop extremely positive and lasting attachments with staff in this home. Individuals who have moved on remain in regular contact with the home and speak very highly of their experience there. One young person said they give the home, 'nine out of ten.' Another young person said, 'I hope to stay here until I am 18.' The absolute strength of the home is the warmth and nurture that young people receive. A parent said, 'The staff are lovely and caring. They are helpful towards me and they are able to comfort him when he is distressed.' A range of professionals say the success of young people can directly attributed to the care they receive in the home.

Staff focus on young people's views, wishes and preferences. Information gathered prior to admission is used to inform the initial care provision. However, this is quickly reviewed, with young people, to make sure it meets their presenting needs. Cultural issues are addressed in daily living. Staff discuss how young people's diverse needs can be met. Staff also enjoy learning from young people, about their culture and individual preferences. This culture of enquiry promotes ever-increasing knowledge, which is used to develop on going improvement.

Care plans are of high quality and are regularly reviewed. Progress is acknowledged and reinforced. Plans, reviews, daily records and targets are written as if speaking to the young person. For example, 'you have attended school every day and have worked hard in lessons.' Consequently, records contribute to an understanding for the young person, of their own life, experiences and plans for the future.

Young people participate in weekly meetings, where they discuss a wide range of

topics. As a result, they are fully involved in decisions regarding the running of the home. They are offered an advocate or independent listener. Additionally, they have regular opportunities to speak to the visitor who monitors the practice of the home in line with regulation 33 and to other visiting managers. There is a complaints process, which young people are fully aware of. Where complaints are made, full and thorough investigation takes place and responses are given.

Staff build exceptionally effective partnerships with a range of key professionals. This ensures a coordinated and seamless approach to challenging barriers that young people face. A professional described the home as, 'instrumental in working with the school.' Young people access a wide range of activities that develop their skills, social networks, confidence and achievements. They are encouraged to make choices and contribute to planning their activities and holidays. As a result, they develop friendships outside of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people in this home feel safe and are safe. They can identify an adult they are able to talk to if they have concerns. They also say they have good relationships with all staff. There have been no incidents of young people going missing and no incidents of restraint for over a year. Staff take time to understand how young people feel, which helps both parties to understand why they react in certain ways. Consequently, staff are able to suggest strategies which help young people divert their behaviour. A young person said, 'staff talk us down, that is much better than being restrained.' Staff employ de-escalation techniques to diffuse aggressive or unacceptable behaviour. They are careful to differentiate between young people and their behaviour. This helps young people to feel valued but also able to accept disapproval of their actions. Considerable time is invested in helping them to understand how their behaviour affects themselves and others.

Staff seek to avoid criminalising young people. However, they are careful to ensure that young people exercise their responsibilities as well as their rights. There are extremely positive relationships with the local police. They attend residents' meetings if issues of bullying arise, visit the home on social calls and reward good behaviour with cinema tickets for young people. There is a robust protocol with the police. All new admissions are discussed with them, to ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place.

There is a robust and transparent procedure for dealing with bullying. Staff place great emphasis on promoting a culture of mutual respect and high quality of relationships. Open discussion and the use of empathy helps young people to work restoratively if they have behaved in way that is hurtful to others.

Risk factors are identified for each young person and risk assessments are regularly reviewed. Young people are encouraged to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. Unsafe behaviour is addressed openly and honestly. An

example of this is the proactive education around the dangers and consequences of fire setting.

The home ensures that all appropriate vetting and checks are in place for staff who work in the home and this protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people.

Leadership and management

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

A permanent registered manager effectively manages the home. She is a positive role model, communicating high expectations to staff regarding outcomes for young people. The staff team are competent, committed and well-established. This means there is continuity of care and consistency for young people. Professionals report that this is a strength of the home and has a positive impact on young people. Staff receive regular, good quality supervision. Annual performance reviews enable staff to identify areas in which they would like to progress professionally. All staff receive timely and relevant training.

Complaints have been followed up and appropriate action taken. There has been continuous improvement in the home since the previous inspection. This is evidenced in the improved outcomes for young people. Examples include the reduction of incidents of young people going missing and the absence of physical restraint. Staff identify the careful admission process as a contributor to this success, ensuring the dynamics of young people works well.

There is robust and rigorous monitoring of the quality of care by both the Registered Manager and the Responsible Individual. This includes consultation with young people, their parents and placing authorities. All reports are submitted to Ofsted within appropriate timescales. The response from a range of professionals who work with the home is extremely positive. The result of monitoring and consultation is used to inform future practice development. A social worker said, 'I would recommend the home to anyone for the level of care they provide.'

There is a development plan in place that clearly identifies realistic targets for the coming year. This includes developing the knowledge and understanding of staff about young people's cultural needs and other characteristics.

Records are clear, up to date and securely stored. The language used in reports and the style of report writing is helpful to young people. It supports their understanding of care plans and progress.

Health and safety requirements, such as checks and fire drills are met. Significant events are notified to relevant parties within the specified timescales. This means that young people benefit from a safe environment and appropriate action where issues arise.

The manager has partially addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection, regarding the maintenance of the home. The home is welcoming and rooms are homely. There is a programme of work in place to address damage. However, some areas of the home, such as the doors and the bathroom, are not maintained to a high standard.

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.