

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Judith Longden
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned and is registered to provide care for a maximum of four 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**.

This home has made substantial improvements since the last inspection and robust action has been taken to address the shortfalls and concerns. As a result the young people enjoy improved care, are kept safe and make good progress in achieving positive outcomes, especially in relation to education and health. The Registered Manager has completed relevant training and is leading the staff team and young people in driving the service forward.

This home provides good care that is well planned and based on the individual needs of young people. Young people are involved in their care and the running of the home through key work, consultations and meetings. However, the quality of record keeping is inconsistent and a recommendation is made to ensure records are clear and up to date. A further recommendation is made in relation to making appointments with the dentist. However these shortfalls do not significantly impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

Young people are kept safe and feel safe. They enjoy positive relationships with staff and each other and their behaviour continues to improve. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of young people and there is a decrease in the number of agency staff used and those that are used are safely recruited and suitably trained.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure children have prompt access to doctors and other health professionals, including specialist services, when they need these services. This specifically relates to dental appointments (NMS 6.4)
- ensure records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. This relates to the clarity and consistency of record keeping. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people enjoy positive outcomes as a result of living at this home. Their progress is reviewed through support from their key workers which helps them to build their confidence and improve their self-esteem.

Young people are taking responsibility for their own health. Risk taking behaviours such as self-harm and smoking are reducing. One young person has been trying various methods to stop smoking which has resulted in a reduction in the number of cigarettes they smoke. Young people's health is further promoted by the provision of a healthy and varied menu and leisure pursuits such as horse riding and rugby. Activities such as pamper evenings and beauty treatments promote young people's emotional well-being and improve their self-esteem.

All young people are in education and attendance is very good. Young people are enthusiastic to learn; one young person prefers to complete additional core subject work rather than take part in reward activities and games at school., They have also applied for part-time jobs and also volunteer at local charity shops. This means they learn additional skills to complement their educational achievements.

Young people enjoy improved contact arrangements with family and friends as a result of good joint work between the placing authority, the home and the individual young person. Young people are encouraged to attend community activities such as the local youth club where they can socialise and form appropriate friendships.

Young people undertake a variety of chores within the home and take responsibility for keeping the home clean and tidy. They also learn how to manage their finances and are supported in opening a bank account. As a result they learn practical skills to help them prepare for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good care management procedures. Care plans are

detailed and highlight their needs and daily routines identify how these will be met. Individual targets are set and key work sessions are undertaken to address these. Key work sessions are also used to discuss issues and concerns with young people. One social worker said of a young person, 'they have a good relationship with their key worker which means they can talk about all manner of things.' The quality of record keeping is generally good but there are some records, such as handover sheets and progress books that lack detail and clarity. A recommendation is therefore made to ensure all records are clear, up to date and provide an understanding of the young person's life.

Young people's participation and involvement has greatly improved. They attend regular house meetings where topics such as the redecoration of the house are discussed. Recently they have begun to chair and minute these meetings. As a result they are learning new skills and are involved in decision-making about the home. Young people have also been consulted about the manager's development plan for the home. This means they feel part of the long-term drive to continue to improve the service.

Young people receive support from a range of health professionals to meet their varied health needs. Staff support young people to attend medical appointments, however, on one occasion, a follow-up appointment with the dentist was not made in a timely manner. A recommendation is therefore made to ensure young people have prompt access to the services they require. Staff are trained in the administration and recording of medication. This means the arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

The home has modified its routines and improved staff communication in order to support young people's attendance at education facilities. Medical appointments are increasingly made out of school time and where this is not possible the home ensures young people attend the core subjects and appointments are made as near to the end of the school day as possible. As a result young people are supported to attend school and achieve their educational potential.

The home has undergone a complete refurbishment and maintenance programme which has resulted in a comfortable, welcoming and homely environment for young people to live in. Young people take responsibility for keeping their own rooms, and the shared spaces are clean and tidy.

Staff encourage young people to engage in a range of activities within the home and the community. Young people enjoy simple pastimes in the home such as playing cards and learning to play the piano. They also enjoy active pursuits in the community such as rugby training and horse riding. This enables them to enjoy their hobbies and improve their skills and confidence.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's behaviour continues to be good. There has been no physical intervention for several months. Positive behaviour is encouraged and rewarded and negative behaviour results in consequences which are discussed with young people. This means young people learn from their behaviour.

The home has a range of policies and procedures for safeguarding practices in respect of child protection, handling allegations and recruitment. The recording of child protection concerns and allegations continues to improve and investigations into allegations and concerns are handled effectively. Staff are trained in safeguarding and issues such as child sexual exploitation. The home operates safe recruitment processes for core staff and agency staff. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This ensures young people are kept safe.

The number of times young people are absent from the home continues to reduce and any absences are for a short period of time. Young people are responded to positively on their return and discuss their absence. Staff identify triggers for this behaviour and discuss these with young people. As a result they are protected as far as possible. One young person said, 'I used to go missing every day before coming here. Here staff talk to me, explain the risks and consequences, keep me safe.'

Staff work closely with others in relation to sexual exploitation issues and concerns and there is a wealth of resources providing up to date information for staff. As a result young people are protected from inappropriate and unsafe relationships.

All required health and safety checks are carried out in a timely manner. Fire drills are held on a regular basis so young people are aware how to evacuate safely.

Leadership and management

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

The home has made a number of improvements and met t compliance notices and requirements that were made following the last inspection. As a result the welfare, care and safety of young people has improved and the leadership and management of the home has strengthened. The organisation has reviewed how it supports the Registered Manager and is revising the induction programme to ensure it delivers the required knowledge for staff and managers to be effective.

No requirements are made as a result of this inspection but two recommendations are made. These relate to the inconsistent quality of records and the need to ensure check-ups are made with the dentist in a timely manner. However, these shortfalls do not significantly impact on the welfare or safety of young people.

Staff and providers are aware of the aims and objectives of the service and the Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the provision. The young people's guide provides all the required information and contact numbers to enable them to contact agencies and organisations for support. The manager has formulated a detailed development plan which outlines plans for the future of the home and provides

direction for continued improvements. Young people and staff have been consulted on the plan and this means they feel involved in the development of the service.

Young people are cared for by a staff team who bring varied skills, experience and qualifications to the service. The home is now less reliant on agency staff and those that are used have been suitably trained. The manager maintains a 'preferred list' of agency staff which ensures some consistency in the staffing. One young person said, 'any agency staff are usually the same few, it's a real improvement.'

The Registered Manager has now completed all mandatory training courses and in addition has attended training on topics such as managing challenging behaviour and bullying. The manager says the training has been useful, for personal learning and development, and for the opportunity to share practice and ideas with others to improve the service provided for young people.

Staff also benefit from a range of training in mandatory subjects such as safeguarding and also in additional courses such as engaging with young people. This enables staff to develop their knowledge and skills to meet the needs of young people. Staff evaluate training following the course. Staff also discuss training in supervision and the manager is currently looking at how this can be improved to ensure staff can evaluate the effectiveness of the training in improving practice.

Staff are supported through regular supervision and staff meetings which enables them to continue to provide a good service for young people. There is a strong team spirit in the home and staff are united in driving forward the improvements for the benefit of young people.

The home has improved the procedures for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends as well as progress made by young people. Young people are consulted as part of the monitoring process. The report compiled, following this monitoring, is evaluative in its overview of the quality of care and progress of young people. The registered provider ensures there are monthly visits to the home in accordance with regulations to carry out checks to ensure the welfare of young people is monitored. As a result young people are consulted about the quality of care they receive and how effectively their needs are met. All significant events relating to the protection of young people in the home are notified to the appropriate agencies and actions taken as required.

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.