

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is one of a number of children's homes operated by a private company. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people who may need support 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 **good**.

Young people receive a good level of care and benefit from positive relationships with staff. The home provides a warm and welcoming environment. A caring, consistent and experienced staff team, who are aware of young people's individual needs provide them with continuity of care.

The manager is in the process of registration with Ofsted and has applied to be Registered Manager of the home. He has relevant management experience and provides strong leadership to the staff team.

Young people said they like the staff; they feel safe and consider the home is a nice place to live. However, some young people are a considerable distance from their home city and say this is not what they want. The manager is proactive in supporting young people to maintain links with those that are important to them such as family and friends.

Staff actively engage with young people to ensure their education and health needs are well considered and promoted. Young people have good school attendance and are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle. There are times when young people put themselves in risky situations despite appropriate advice and information from staff.

Staff liaise with relevant agencies and are proactive to try and reduce missing from home episodes. Staff successfully support young people to gain skills for independence in order to move on from this home in preparation for leaving care.

A social care professional said they consider young people are well looked after and staff do their utmost to keep them safe. A parent said they feel staff support their child to make informed and safe decisions to promote their welfare. However, young people are not always responsive to staff's advice.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to house maintenance and young people's access to an independent advocate.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting (NMS 10.3)
- ensure children have access to independent advice and support from adults who they can contact directly and in private about problems or concerns, which is appropriate to their age and understanding. (NMS 1.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress at the home in respect of their health, education and support for their emotional well-being. Their sense of identity is promoted by staff who understand the importance of maintaining family contact and the development of appropriate friendships.

Young people are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle through a good diet, exercise and access to health professionals. They are helped to understand the importance of good health and well-being through contact with health promotion services and safeguarding agencies.

Staff regularly discuss the dangers associated with inappropriate risk taking. However, on occasions young people put themselves in risky situations by staying out overnight. Staff follow risk assessments, and work in partnership with placing authorities and safeguarding agencies to reduce these episodes. Young people are given lots of information, advice and guidance about the dangers of smoking and the misuse of drugs and alcohol. Young people talk positively about reducing their smoking habit.

Young people receive education in the home. Their attendance and achievement is good taking account of their starting point on admission to the home. Young people said they 'quite like' education and look forward to work experience opportunities. Young people are encouraged to participate in appropriate activities in the wider

community. Staff are proactive to seek out a wide range of leisure activities to enable young people to pursue their hobbies such as ice skating and visits to places of interest.

Young people learn how to prepare meals and carry out routine household tasks in the home. They develop confidence in a range of practical skills that help prepare them for adulthood and leaving care. Young people commented on their ability to cook meals and said they are good at saving money. They feel very confident about their skills for independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people have good relationships with staff and describe this as a 'nice home'. They like the staff who care for them and feel listened to. A parent said staff keep in regular contact with them and inform them of their child's progress at the home. Some parents said they feel this type of children's home does not fully meet their child's needs and confirm they are in dialogue with the placing authority regarding this.

Statutory review meetings take place at timely intervals. Young people and their parents are asked for their views to inform the care planning process. The home's complaints process is known to young people and they use this successfully to make their concerns known. The manager updates young people as to the progress and outcome of their complaint.

Young people have opportunities to participate in the house meetings which give them another opportunity to have a say about their care, routines and general running of the home. Changes have been made as a result of this, for example, a large outdoor trampoline was bought for young people's use in the garden. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedroom. They are given an amount of money to choose bedroom decorations. Young people said they are very pleased with their choice of wallpaper and look forward to their bedroom being decorated.

Staff are caring and have a good understanding of the individual needs of the young people. Young people participate in the development of their placement plans so that they know how their needs are to be met. Staff are well informed about the plans and endeavour to meet their needs.

Some young people are placed at a considerable distance from their home area, and their family and friends. Although the reasons for this are explained to them, this is not always what young people want and they feel their views on this aspect of their care are not always taken account of. Young people are unfamiliar with advocacy and children's rights services and the support this type of service can provide. The manager said he would ensure this service is made available to young people.

Education is tailored to the individual needs of the young people. For example, some young people are educated in the home by a number of different tutors who are employed by the organisation. Staff work closely with the tutors and attend education reviews. A social worker and school tutor described communication between the home and themselves as very good. Consequently, staff have a good understanding of young people's educational needs and how to support them. Staff praise young people's achievements and provide incentives for daily school attendance. Young people said they now spend more time in education than they have done in previous years.

Young people are encouraged to participate in sports and leisure pursuits as well as to choose different hobbies and interests. A computer with keep fit programmes is available in the home. Additionally, staff promote activities outside of the home such as going to the cinema and visits to nature reserves. This broadens young people's interests and promotes good social skills.

Young people are offered a healthy diet and have opportunities to prepare meals or snacks in the home's kitchen. Staff are aware of young people's individual dietary needs and their likes and dislikes. Young people have regular contact with health practitioners and attend routine health appointments. Young people commented on their recent positive visit to the local dentist.

The home is a detached and spacious house with large gardens. It is situated in a pleasant residential area near to parkland. In general the decoration and overall maintenance of the home are good. However, external maintenance of the house is not routinely carried out to ensure safety and good upkeep of the home and footpaths.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people who come to live at this home are looked after by staff who understand safeguarding procedures and receive child protection training. This supports them to protect young people from harm. Young people say they feel safe at the home and that staff show concern for their welfare.

Young people report that when they have time away from the home they are able to keep in regular contact with staff by phone and this helps them to stay safe. Parents and social work professionals consider staff work hard to help keep young people safe. However, young people place themselves in risky situations through missing from home episodes. Individual risk assessments address young people's particular vulnerabilities and these outline strategies that enable staff to address young people's concerning behaviour.

Placement plans are regularly monitored and updated to reflect the changing care needs of young people. This demonstrates that the home responds to each young person's needs and wishes promptly and takes action to promote their well-being.

For example, the manager sought to increase the amount of independence time a young person has outside of the home when unnecessary restrictions were in place.

The staff team are trained in the appropriate use of physical restraint and this is only used as a last resort in order to help keep young people safe. The home's records show no restraints since the last inspection. Young people's positive behaviour is encouraged. Staff work closely with health professionals who assist them to manage young people's behaviour appropriately. Bullying is not an issue in the home at this time. Staff are vigilant in promoting young people's welfare and work with them to understand and counter bullying.

The provider adopts a robust procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices. This ensures, as far as possible, that young people who come to live at the home are looked after by suitable people. Young people participate in fire evacuation practices and know how to leave the building safely and quickly in the case of emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has applied to Ofsted to be the Registered Manager of the home. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and this assists him to provide good leadership and effective management of the home. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection.

The staff team say they have very good support and supervision from the manager in relation to their work and professional development. A consistent, caring and experienced staff team work at the home. The majority of staff have an appropriate childcare qualification to support them in their work with the young people. In particular, staff have helped young people to make progress to attend and engage in education.

Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the assessed needs of the young people. Young people confirm a regular team of staff care for them. A social worker described good partnership working with the home and said 'staff are good at keeping contact, I am kept informed.'

The manager has a good overview of the running of the home and there are comprehensive monitoring systems to ensure the home is run in line with its Statement of Purpose. The home's development plan outlines the strengths and areas for improvement. This enables the manager to address issues relative to care in the home and continue to improve care outcomes for young people.

The home maintains detailed records about the care and welfare of young people. Young people are supported by staff to engage and contribute to their case records so that they have an understanding about their care and time spent at the home.

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.