

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a small private children's home catering for one young person who may have 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**.

The home provides good outcomes and quality of care for the young people. Systems and practices reflect a clear and consistent focus on the needs and welfare of the young people and high ratios of staff provide effective care.

Care planning and day-to-day care is highly individualised and meets the individual needs of the young people in residence. Care plans and placement plans demonstrate detailed, robust and comprehensive planning for each young person's assessed needs.

Young people have good opportunities to engage with staff and they develop open and meaningful relationships with them. Young people's education is well organised, with them benefiting from the support and guidance from staff in both their attendance and their achievements.

Support through therapy and reflective practice is evident from the key working sessions in which young people engage. This results in young people gaining a much clearer understanding of their behaviour and having good opportunities to address the less positive aspects of it. Young people gain self-confidence and self-esteem, they acquire greater insights into their history, culture and background. This enables them to make sense of their, often, disjointed history in care and empowers them to make a positive contribution to their future plans. Staff provide good alternative role models who enable young people to have the confidence to challenge pre-conceived ideals and prejudices and to work at maintaining improvement.

The safeguarding of young people is good and this includes a reduction in behaviours

that may place them at risk. This is supported by good health and safety systems. Young people know what is expected of them and feel settled because of this. There is strong leadership which results in young people being cared for by a motivated and professional staff team. There are effective arrangements for monitoring service delivery and this contributes to the high quality care that young people receive. Good records are maintained to support the work undertaken at the home.

One recommendation has been made following this inspection. This regards ensuring that the patio area at the side of the house is adequately maintained, as several of the slabs have become loose and uneven and currently constitute a tripping hazard.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting, this refers to the uneven patio surface, which currently constitutes a serious tripping hazard. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The home has a good track record for enabling young people to make good progress, when viewed from their individual starting points at admission. Young people's self-confidence is encouraged and nurtured and they are supported to explore their background, culture and ethnicity. The home promotes a positive ethos that embraces diversity and difference; as a result, young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and cultures and to have respect for other people. This ethos promotes positive behaviours and assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Young people's health is well maintained by regular routine check-ups and prompt treatments and they are enabled wherever possible to take responsibility for their own health. Staff identify, support and address young people's health issues. Good liaison protocols have been developed between the home and the local children and adolescent mental health service. This ensures that young people's psychological health is appropriately monitored and supported. This is enhanced by regular access to an allocated therapist, who either provides individual sessions to young people, or provides 'insight and guidance' to the home's staff team.

Young people are encouraged to take part in a wide range of physical activities, which not only promote fitness but also promote social development. Individual needs are included in placement plans that are updated when the needs have been

met, or when new issues are identified. This helps the staff team monitor young people's emotional and physical well-being and ensures continuing good health and development. Healthy, balanced and varied menus enable young people to learn the importance of a good balanced diet. Menus are developed with the young people at house meetings and reflect the young people's likes and dislikes and encourages them to explore food from other cultures.

Young people's attendance and educational attainment is good, this has done much to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience. Staff use every opportunity to help young people to successfully engage in education. This supportive approach enables young people to build their knowledge and skills. It also helps them to develop the values and skills they need to help them stay fully engaged in their education.

The service works in partnership with families and significant others to ensure young people can maintain helpful and close relationships with important people in their lives. Particular attention is given to planning and organising family contact and staff listen to young people and family members in order to achieve arrangements that are appropriate and safe.

The staff team are committed to providing young people with individualised support, focused on their personal development and individual circumstances. Young people benefit from a pragmatic approach, which fully involves them in day-to-day routines that help them learn about personal responsibility and growing independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people placed at the home receive a consistent and good standard of care. Care planning is highly personalised and focused on the individual needs of each young person and is regularly reviewed and updated. Placement plans are very detailed and well organised. They form an integral part of supporting the young person's progress. Staff encourage and enable young people to express their views and to be involved in their care planning.

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with caring supportive staff who have a good understanding of their needs. This encourages young people to express themselves positively and has enabled them to gain in self-confidence and benefit from their relationship with staff members.

Young people express their views more formally through established key working sessions with nominated staff members and through more formal house meetings. Key worker sessions not only look at recent events, but also support the work of the organisation's therapy team in helping young people to make sense of the events that have brought them into care. Work is also undertaken on young people's cultural identity and on building their self-confidence and self-esteem and any other issues identified in the young person's care plan.

House meetings are well recorded and evidence that young people are listened to, their views are valued and when appropriate acted upon. Where it has not been possible to implement a young person's request or ideas the reasons why are fully shared with the young person. This helps to promote meaningful relationships between the young people and the staff group based upon honest and open dialogue.

Young people have a voice and understand that they can influence the running of the home. They are aware that they can make complaints and representations and understand that staff take such matters seriously. The young people's guide provides details of how to complain; both internally and to appropriate external agencies. Details are also available on notice boards within the home.

Young people's education and health are well supported by staff members. Each young person benefits from attendance at routine check-ups and planned healthcare interventions. All staff are trained in first aid and medication administration. This is supported by a robust system for the safe handling, administration, storage, disposal and recording of medication. Health needs and healthily living are well promoted in the home by staff that understand the importance of appropriate lifestyle choices. Nutritious and healthy foods are prepared and staff encourage young people to help plan the menus and meals.

The staff team have high expectations for the young people they care for and place great importance on regular school attendance and on high attainment. Young people with records of previous poor attendance are supported to re-engage with education. Successes are celebrated, which improves individual self-confidence and personal self-esteem. Current attendance is good and attainment levels are improving, when compared with each young person's individual starting points. Good communications with the educational establishments attended ensures that the young people receive the support they need, to make progress and achieve their potential.

Young people are encouraged to partake in a wide range of activities both in the home and in the local community. Young people have the opportunity to attend local clubs and youth groups as well as accessing local leisure and sports facilities. These activities are not only enjoyable but purposeful and have enabled the young people to develop their personal confidence and to socialise with a wider group of young people.

The home is well maintained and is furnished appropriately to meet the needs of the young people. Recent refurbishment and redecoration have improved the home's facilities and have done much to improve the homely atmosphere. Communal areas are clean tidy and functional, with very little evidence of damage. Young people are encouraged to take appropriate ownership of 'their' home and to personalise their individual areas. The home, although in a rural setting, enjoys good links to local facilities and is within easy reach of good transport links. However, the home also has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities,

shopping and contact visits with family.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe by staff that are experienced and knowledgeable of safeguarding children. Training supports staff members to increase their knowledge and understanding of signs and symptoms of abuse. High ratios of staff are provided and this supports the young people with their complex emotional needs.

Young people receive high ratios of supervision and support which enables them to both feel and remain safe. Anti-bullying procedures and missing person procedures are in place, but bullying has not been identified as an issue in the home. Protocols agreed with the local police to support missing children are in place in the event of any young person absenting themselves from the home without staff approval.

Young people's individual care plans are supported by very good up-to-date behaviour management plans. These identify young people's individual vulnerabilities, behavioural triggers and provided agreed strategies to promote their welfare. Staff have a good understanding of the individual young people's needs and vulnerabilities.

Positive behaviour is promoted and young people's behaviour generally improves as a result. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours identified as being unacceptable. This enables young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact positively with the wider community. Young people confirm that the use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. Staff support a reflective and analytical approach to behaviour control and young people discuss their behaviour and adopt ways to improve it. This has enabled young people to take greater control over themselves and choices that they make. They are invited to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions, which helps them develop understanding and responsibility.

The home's policies state that physical intervention by staff is a measure of last resort, which will only be used to preserve safety. The resolutions of most incidents are through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. When physical intervention is used, staff and young people are spoken with individually by the home's manager to discuss the matter and consider how methods of behaviour and conflict could be better managed in the future. Young people use these opportunities to discuss their behaviour and how they can be helped to manage it more effectively.

All staff in the home are recruited through robust employment processes which include reference checking and all statutory checks. All visitors to the home are monitored and must sign in and out of the building. This keeps young people safe from contact with people that are unsuitable. Young people are protected and feel

confident that staff safeguard them.

Young people are provided with a pleasant home that ensures that they are safe from hazards and where risks are reduced. Young people are further supported by staff who are vigilant to fire safety and more general health and safety. Most maintenance and repairs needed in the home are promptly attended to. However, loose slabs on the patio area to the side of the house currently present a serious tripping hazard. The grounds generally require attention as some areas are so overgrown, that they have become inaccessible to the young people. Young people, however, benefit from a pleasant and generally well maintained home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed with good, consistent leadership and direction. All staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities. Young people benefit from a well organised home where care staff are motivated and competent to support them. To provide support for the young people, staffing ratios are high and all staff shifts are effectively planned to ensure that young people's needs are met.

Staff report that the manager provides good leadership and support, supervision is regular and meets their needs. The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities' comprehensive information about the services offered by the home. Social workers are clear about what the home seeks to provide and the services and facilities within the home.

The home has a very good system for dealing effectively with young people's complaints. Young people confirmed their awareness of the home's complaints system and stated they would use it with confidence; however, to date no complaints have been received.

Regulation 33 visits by an independent person and regulation 34 monitoring by the manager are regularly undertaken to quality assure the services provided. The information gained from these checks are used to make improvements to the service. Development plans are in place which help to ensure that there is a clear focus on improvement. Young people benefit from a high standard of care which is maintained by the prompt action taken to address any shortfall or area requiring development.

The home's monitoring systems demonstrate that improvements for young people have been achieved in their education and their day-to-day behaviour. Young people develop an improved sense of self-confidence and express their views and feelings without fear. Files are well organised and these documents contribute to young people's understanding of their life, experiences and plans for the future.

Staff say that training has enabled them to be more confident in their role and able

to understand and meet the needs of the young people. Young people say that they can go to any staff members and that they receive good support or guidance.

All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities, and appropriate action is taken following the incident.

Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and would contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their life in care, if they choose to access these documents. The registered person notifies the appropriate authorities about all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in 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.