

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a private organisation. The home is registered to provide care for up to two young people of either gender, aged between 10 and 17 years.

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 are clearly benefiting from the secure boundaries and structure the home provides. Sensitive support enables young people to make excellent progress and achieve outstanding outcomes, particularly in relation to their individual starting points despite their very complex needs. The home is judged to be good overall, but provides an excellent level of individual care and is extremely well managed.

The staff team is highly motivated and committed to the young people in their care. They form meaningful relationships with young people who at times exhibit high-risk behaviours, including self-harming. They successfully educate and support young people to keep themselves safe and to significantly reduce these behaviours. This enables young people to make good progress in other aspects of their lives. While acknowledging the progress made, young people remain emotionally fragile and levels of risk, particularly in respect of self-harming remain high.

Young people hold the quality of care they receive in high regard. This extends to viewing the staff as a strength of the home. A good rapport exists between young people and staff that is both trusting and sincere and promotes young people's confidence in expressing their views and opinions.

The staff team fulfil their responsibility to provide care and appropriate protection, which ensures young people feel safe and cared for. The leadership team is ambitious and motivated to improve the provision further. Decision making is extremely child-focused. Rigorous monitoring of the quality of care means the managers have a clear understanding of the strengths and the weaknesses within the home.

Two recommendations has been made, one in respect of ensuring that damaged play equipment in the garden is removed or replaced the other is in respect of the need to either refurbish or redecorate the home's communal bathroom.

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 the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, this refers to refurbishing/redecorating the communal bathroom (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Avoidable hazards are removed as is consistent with a domestic setting; this refers to the removal of the broken trampoline in the garden. (NMS.10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. These boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff group, based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps them to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience.

Young people are provided with a nurturing and safe environment where they can make good progress in relation to their individual starting point. Staff work consistently to address young people's individual needs and to promote their physical and emotional well-being. Young people are successfully encouraged to express their feelings and emotions. The home promotes a positive ethos that fully 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 also promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Staff clearly identify, support and address young people's health issues. Individual needs are included in placement plans that are updated when health 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. Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, take regular exercise and choose to eat healthy food options. New and different food options are

regularly introduced to the home's menu to expand young people's food experience, nutritional knowledge and confidence.

Young people's attendance and educational attainment continue to improve, which has done much to improve their poor self-image and build up their emotional resilience. Staff maximise every opportunity to help young people 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.

Young people enjoy a good range of activities both in the home and out in the community. This gives young people opportunities to develop their social skills and increased interactions with peers and the wider community.

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. Staff prioritise the work they do with young people in terms of life skills and future plans. 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 **outstanding**.

Young people, benefit from individualised programmes of support, in line with their identified needs. Staff in the home and independent specialists, such as clinical psychologists and members of the local children and adolescent mental health services team, deliver the service and provide on-going support. Comprehensive care plans identify areas for development based upon young people's individual skills and abilities. Staff display very good communication skills and young people confirm that they feel listened to and are actively involved in their care.

Young people benefit from generally good relationships with a consistent and caring staff team. Meaningful and sustainable relationships have been developed, based upon mutual respect and developed trust. Relationships are occasionally strained and assaults on staff are not uncommon. However, the frequency of these are diminishing over time and these behaviours are being managed consistently and sensitively.

Clear policies and procedures effectively and consistently applied by a well trained staff team effectively safeguard young people's health. Vigilant checking in and

dispensing of medication ensures accurate and up-to-date records, which evidences safe practice. Excellent care planning supported by up-to-date and accurate assessments of risk ensures that staff have access to accurate up-to-date information about the young people in their care.

Young people live in an environment where their individual health needs are identified and services provided to meet them. Staff support young people to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them, for independence and adulthood. The staff group provides the right balance between nurturing and enabling young people to develop appropriate self-reliance. Young people have their individual cultural, religious, language and racial needs effectively identified and addressed. They have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of concern. Young people state that all staff are approachable and acknowledge their rights and value the contributions they make.

Individual care files contain health information and details of each young person's General Practitioner, dentist, optician and specific external specialists. Staff support and encourage young people to access external health professionals in line with their identified need. Clearly maintained records of appointments with health professionals, evidence that the physical, emotional and mental health needs of the young people are effectively met.

High levels of educational attendance and attainment are encouraged and staff have high expectations of the young people in their care. Highly committed staff support young people's education and liaise regularly and effectively with the schools they attend; this ensures that young people achieve positive outcomes. Despite the difficulties that young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to living at the home, their improvement in both attendance and attainment are remarkable. Young people speak positively of their education and the support and encouragement they receive.

Young people are actively encouraged to pursue their own particular interests, and to try new activities. This increases young people's experiences and helps them to enhance their confidence and their social skills and abilities.

Detailed individualised care plans include all relevant information regarding young people's needs. This ensures that staff can deliver care that focuses on the individual needs of each young person. Young people's care needs and development are reviewed regularly as a means of acknowledging the progress they have made and any changes in circumstances. Staff, young people and, where appropriate, their families are assisted to contribute their opinions and young people confirm that this is the case. This ensures that all decisions are known and understood by all and can be implemented effectively into the daily living arrangements.

Communication between staff and young people is very good, which results in staff being able to respond effectively; this ensures that young people's needs and wishes are well known. Young people have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of concern. They confirm that they are encouraged and

supported to make decisions about their lives in line with their individual needs. As a result, they feel valued, take ownership of their placement and actively influence the running of the home. Young people present well, are appropriately dressed and have sufficient belongings to meet their needs. They receive pocket money and appropriate allowances to help purchase clothing and toiletries of their choice.

Young people live in a bright, modern home which provides sufficient space to meet their needs. The home is decorated to a good standard and young people have good quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings. The communal bathroom, however, while functional is in need of re-decoration and refurbishment; this was the only area of negative comment made by young people during the inspection process. The outside environment is good, the home has extensive gardens to the rear of the property which are available for young people's recreational use. However, the broken trampoline in the garden would be dangerous if used and should be removed, or replaced. The home 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 confirm that they feel generally safe living in this home. The home has a set of comprehensive individualised assessments of risk for the young people in residence. These cover aspects of their potential behaviour, self-harm, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake. Risk assessments are proactive, identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these.

Self-harming and extreme risk taking behaviours are acknowledged features of the home's current residents. These behaviours have been comprehensively risk assessed and strategies, agreed as part of the individual care plans to challenge them and promote individual safety are in place. While self-harming behaviours continue, appropriate support is being provided to the young people by specialist outside agencies, the children and adolescent mental health service for example and regular access to the company's therapy team. Staff have received additional training on dealing with bi-polar disorders and on dealing with ligatures and self-harming behaviours, to enable them to better understand the young people's anxieties and to better deal with these issues. There is clear evidence that staff intervention and support have had a positive impact as, despite occasional peaks of activity, there has been a marked decline in both threats to self-harm and in risk taking behaviour.

Young people confirm that the use of physical interventions are infrequent, only being used as a last resort, by staff, to ensure safety for all. The resolutions of most incidents are through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. The home's manager monitors each intervention, ensuring that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and comprehensively

recorded. The manager also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, receive any medical attention if required or requested and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed.

Staff, guided by other relevant professionals, work hard to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. 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. Young people understand that the boundaries in place are there to ensure their safety. They are invited to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions, which helps them develop understanding and responsibility.

Staff manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement practice. Tested responses are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off-site excursion. No episodes of young people being missing from care have occurred since the home's last inspection. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and use this insight to assist young people in managing their feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner. This deters young people from running off and putting themselves at risk.

Staff receive regular and wide-ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, ensures the continued development of staffs' knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering aspects such as prevention of bullying, the processing of complaints, safeguarding young people and behaviour management. These policies and procedures are applied constantly, by a comprehensively trained staff team that receive regular updates to their training that ensures young people are effectively protected from abuse. The regular and effective monitoring of the home's records and staff practice, by the home's Registered Manager ensures that young people receive safe care in line with their individual needs.

The home has a vigorous health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations. Good staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection, recruitment and retention of staff. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced and provides excellent leadership and support to the staff group. This means they provide outstanding quality care tailored to address the individual needs of the young people living in the home. Open and honest dialogue helps young people learn from their mistakes. Consequently, young people make significant changes in the way they react to others and in the choices that they make. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is strong, visible leadership which promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for young people.

Staff receive excellent support and guidance through a clear management structure. This structure is successful at meeting the aims of the service to foster social awareness and mutual respect within the home and wider community. It achieves this by encouraging a happy and caring atmosphere in an extremely professional and motivating environment. Consistent and regular supervision, coupled with team meetings, provide staff with excellent opportunities to discuss their role, their professional development and the impact that working with children with complex needs has upon them.

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. The financial viability of the provider is clearly evidenced in the high level of resources committed to the home. Young people confirm that they are treated with the utmost respect and dignity and are supported by staff to overcome significant and complex issues.

All staff members comment positively about the manager's commitment, child-centred approach, staff support and clear monitoring processes. Clear lines of accountability in the home has enabled a stable, consistent and structured environment to be established. Staff duty rotas confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on duty at all times. 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. Since the home was last inspected three complaints have been received, all have been dealt with appropriately and resolutions have been shared with the young people.

Staff are provided with quality induction and further training, support and resources and therefore understand the developmental needs of young people. The comprehensive training covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid, as well as any specific training indicated by the needs of individual young people. The staff team work proactively to help young people to achieve positive outcomes, overcome barriers and to enhance their well-being. Good staff communication ensures that staff are consistent in the care they provide, which ensures young people's individual needs are well met. Young people take an active

part in the running of the home and they are encouraged to make their views known, through discussions with staff and by attending house meetings. Staff ensure that a safe, secure and nurturing environment is maintained which assists young people to make real progress and to fulfil their individual potential.

The manager has established rigorous internal quality assurance monitoring systems. It is clear that he checks all reporting systems regularly and comments if any record fails to meet either the home's policies and procedures or national regulations. Regular internal monitoring reports are produced which help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need. Regular regulation 33 visits take place to provide additional quality assurance mechanisms and involve consulting young people wherever possible. The managers have a strong commitment to meeting young people's needs. The levels of progress young people have made despite their complex needs is a testament to the impact the managers have made.

The home has comprehensive development plans for continuing improvement based upon its record of accomplishment, staff training programme and provision of a high quality physical environment. 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.