

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**.

Sensitive support enables young people to make good progress and achieve good outcomes. The staff team is motivated and proud of their work. They form meaningful relationships with young people who at times exhibit high-risk behaviours. They successfully educate and support young people to keep themselves safe and reduce these behaviours. This enables young people to make good progress in other aspects of their lives.

Young people hold their quality of care in high regard. This extends to viewing the staff as 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 protection, which ensures young people feel and stay safe. The leadership team is ambitious and motivated to improve 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.

One recommendation has been made, requiring the home's managers to make every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted.

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 every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that children's attachments are not overly disrupted. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. 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. The extremely competent staff team has successfully created a nurturing environment that has well-defined boundaries, but remains both homely and supportive.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to take an active interest in, and responsibility for, their own physical health. Young people's health, including physical, emotional, and psychological health, is actively supported. Healthy eating is encouraged and young people know and understand the benefits of a nutritious and varied diet. Staff assist young people to make well-informed choices about their personal health, emotional and social issues, including sexual health, relationships, and the dangers of substance misuse.

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.

Young people learn to value and enjoy their environment. They are actively involved in contributing to the selection of furnishings and items for the home. They are also encouraged and supported to decorate their bedrooms. Young people raise suggestions to improve the home through their young people's meetings and in day-to-day discussions with staff.

All young people are on the roll of an appropriate educational establishment. Young people are encouraged to take a pride in their educational achievements; subsequently, attendance is good. This does much to improve young people's 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.

Staff support enables young people to maintain appropriate contact with their families and important people in their lives in line with their care plans. Guidance and practical experience in managing their own allowances, shopping, cooking and cleaning help young people prepare for their eventual transition into adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. A competent staff team has created a homely, nurturing environment that has well-defined boundaries. These boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying their individuality.

Good adult role models emphasise the equal value of each individual. This helps young people understand the negative impact of stereotypical gender, cultural and age-related issues. The good-quality day-to-day care provided ensures that each young person's individual cultural and gender needs are identified and met.

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff, based on mutual respect, which enable them to form meaningful and sustainable attachments. Young people benefit from individualised programmes of support, in line with their identified needs. These are provided by both the staff in the home and independent specialists, such as clinical psychologists and members of the child and adolescent mental health services team. 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 actively involved in their care.

Clear policies and procedures, effectively 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. Good care planning, supported by up-to-date and accurate assessments of risk, ensures that staff have access to good up-to-date information about the young people in their care.

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.

Young people live in a healthy environment where their individual health needs are identified and there are services provided to meet these. Staff support young people to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them for 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 staff are approachable and acknowledge their rights and truly value their contributions.

The management and staff of the home promote appropriate pride in high levels of educational attendance and attainment, whilst recognising the difficulties that young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to living at the home. Staff support young people's education and liaise regularly and effectively with the schools they attend; this ensures that young people achieve positive outcomes.

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

Young people are actively involved in their care planning. They understand and can clearly describe the care and support they receive and the objectives they are working to achieve. Young people's progress and success is shared regularly with placing social workers and parents to ensure that they are up to date with developments. Placement meetings and reviews take place at appropriate intervals. Young people confirm they are encouraged to contribute to their review and planned care. This ensures that all decisions are known and understood by all and can be implemented effectively into the daily care planning arrangements. Up-to-date care plans include all relevant information regarding young people's needs. These ensure that staff can deliver care that focuses on the individual needs of each young person.

Communication between staff and young people is 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 and actively influence the running of the home. Young people present well, wear appropriate clothing 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 that provides sufficient space to meet their needs. The home is well maintained and decorated to a high standard. When redecoration or repairs are identified as necessary, these are proactively addressed through a short-term maintenance system and a long-term development plan. All safety concerns highlighted on the home's last inspection have been appropriately addressed. Young people have good-quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings. The home enjoys good links to local facilities and is within easy reach of good transport links. 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 very safe living in this home. The home has a set of very comprehensive, individualised assessments of risk for the young people in residence. These cover aspects of their potential behaviour, 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.

Staff, guided by other relevant professionals, work hard to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. Young people confirm that the use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. 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 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.

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. All physical interventions that have been applied since the home's last inspection have been necessary and have been appropriately applied and comprehensively recorded. The home's manager monitors each intervention, ensuring that the intervention is necessary, and applied and recorded correctly. He 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 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 staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

The home has effective policies in place in relation to young people absenting themselves from the home without staff approval. Improvements in practice, in line with recommendations made following the home's last inspection, ensure that the care and support provided minimises the risk that young people will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should they absent themselves. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement this practice. Staff remain acutely aware of the potential reasons why individual young people may go missing. They use this insight to assist them in managing young people's feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner, which deters young people from running off and putting themselves at risk.

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 well-trained staff team that receives regular updates to their training. This 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-quality risk assessments of the whole children's home environment have been conducted which identify all potential sources of harm. These assessments are recorded in writing and are regularly reviewed. 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. 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 that knows them well.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a well-managed service that is having a good impact on their outcomes and life experiences. The managers and staff team are clear about the aims and objectives of the service. This is effectively communicated to placing local authorities and the young people who come to live in the home.

The home has a clear, accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authority's good information about the services offered by the home. The young person's guide is age-appropriate, accessible and is explained to young people at the point of placement by a member of the staff team. The financial viability of the provider is clearly shown by the development plans. These show dates of further staff training and planned maintenance and decoration to ensure the physical environment is maintained to a high standard. Young people confirm that they are treated with the utmost respect and dignity and are supported by staff to overcome significant and complex issues.

The staff team is well informed and understands their roles and responsibilities. Staff know who they are accountable to and what tasks and responsibilities are delegated to them. They feel well supported by the Registered Manager and the home's acting deputy. Consistent and regular supervision, coupled with team meetings, provide staff with good opportunities to discuss their role, their professional development and the impact that working with children with complex needs has upon them.

The staff team is positive about the training and induction programme and feels it equips them to meet the needs of the young people. The company's training programme is well established. The staff team receives comprehensive training that is specific to the needs of the young people in residence. Personal training plans are created for every staff member. They initially receive a comprehensive programme of induction, followed by mandatory training that is refreshed at regular intervals.

Appropriate supervision, support and resources enable staff to understand the developmental needs of young people. Joint working is commonplace. Well-established multi-agency partnerships with health services, placing authorities and the local mental health team ensure they all work together in the best interests of young people.

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 have 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 to meet the young people's identified needs. Whilst acknowledging that there are always sufficient staff on duty, young people did express some frustration and discomfort with the lack of consistency of staffing, particularly when staff holidays require additional staff to be deployed in the home. Deficiencies in deputising arrangements identified at the home's interim inspection in February 2012 have been effectively resolved. The home's acting deputy has undertaken additional training in staff supervision and management to enable her to adequately fulfil this role.

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. Only one complaint has been made since the home was last inspected.

Following the home's interim inspection in February 2012, one requirement and five recommendations were made. The requirement was to ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access were free from hazards to health or safety. Improvements in household monitoring systems and assessments of risk have been implemented which now mean that this has been fully achieved. All of the recommendations made have been appropriately addressed, either by the provision of additional specific training or the implementation of new or amended policies and procedures.

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 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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.