

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Clark
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned by a public limited company. The group has eight children's homes, three semi-independent units and a school. It provides care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities. At any given time, two children can be accommodated under short-break arrangements and one child can live at the home as a permanent living arrangement.

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 ensures that children make good educational, social and behavioural progress in relation to their starting points. Children's individual care needs are clearly identified and included in a clearly written and reviewed care plan. Children feel safe and are safe.

Staff are well managed and supported and receive a good level of training. The Registered Manager is currently undertaking a management award and three members of the care team staff are undertaking the minimum professional qualification.

The Children's Guide for the short break service does not include the contact details of the Children's Rights Director.

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 Children's Guide for short term breaks includes how a child can contact the Children's Rights Director. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The outcomes for the maintenance of young people's good health, educational progress and positive behavioural development are outstanding.

All children and young people are registered with a general practitioner, dentist and optician and key workers ensure that routine check-ups are carried out at a timely frequency. The home has a non-smoking policy and none of the children currently attending the home smoke. The organisation has a contractual arrangement with a clinical psychologist and a play therapist who carry out direct work with children and offer clinical supervision to the staff group to give guidance on the support needed for individual young people. Placing authority social workers also link children to the local child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) team. Annual health reviews of looked after children are carried out by a nurse. All of these measures help to promote children's good health.

The home encourages the young people to engage in healthy activities. There are a number of bicycles which the young people enjoy using and there is a rule that safety helmets must be used. Children adhere to this rule and this helps them to be aware of the risks associated with cycling. Young people are supported by staff in attending a local swimming pool and one child has learnt how to swim while being resident at the home. Another young person is supported by staff in attending a local rugby club. These activities help to increase young people's fitness levels and their sense of enjoyment. All of the young people are actively involved in menu planning and get support from staff in helping with food preparation. While none of the children currently placed are of the age where they yet need to be rigidly prepared for living independently involvement with menu planning and food preparation encourages self-sufficiency and is an example of good parenting. This on-going attention to young people's social development and physical health, participating in healthy activities and eating sensibly promotes healthy lifestyles and increases the fitness of young people.

Young people are supported in achieving their educational potential by attending either the agency's own educational facility or mainstream school. Care staff will go into school with a young person and serve as a teaching support assistant if deemed necessary. All children have a personal education plan in place and this helps to identify their educational progress and areas they need support with. Social workers report that there is good communication between care and teaching staff and a daily exchange of information between teaching and care staff. This ensures that care staff can provide on-going support for young people with their educational progress. This has been particularly evident in the positive way that one young person who had not attended formal education for long periods before coming to the home has made exceptional educational progress while at the home and is now attending

mainstream school with good attendance levels.

Young people receive age related pocket monies and are given a clothing allowance and are encouraged to open savings accounts and to make practical decisions about clothing budgeting and food preparation. By providing young people with a positive educational experience and opportunity to handle their personal finances they are better prepared for independent living.

All areas of children's behavioural development which require staff support is fully identified in their placement plan and is subject to individual risk assessment. In addition to the placing authorities' care plan young people's individual care needs are assessed by a key worker within the home and are clearly written into a placement plan which takes into account all aspects of the child's social and personal requirements. These plans are reviewed in tandem with the review system. Social workers from placing authorities are happy with the progress young people have made during their time at the home and feel that the home's practice is in line with their agreed care plan. One social worker commented that, 'X's behaviour whilst at the home has really improved.' On-going care work based on clearly written placement plans helps in ensuring positive outcomes for young people.

Contact between young people and their families is fully supported by staff who give practical support in facilitating contact arrangements. Individual arrangements are in place for each child's use of mobile phones which are appropriately risk assessed. Staff keep families well informed about their children's progress and are always invited to attend review meetings that are held in the home. By maintaining their family links young people are successfully retaining a clear sense of their personal identity and have a good awareness of their historical background.

Quality of care

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

The home celebrates young people's academic and personal achievements and has a range of measures in place that are aimed at acknowledging these achievements and promoting young people's self-worth. These include financial incentives for achievements and trips out. The organisation has a periodic newsletter for young people, which informs them about events and any service developments. There is currently no regular consultation forum for young people to meet as a group within the organisation as a whole and express their views about the service or make recommendations for service development. These measures would not only empower young people but help them build on self-esteem and self-worth. Relationships formed between staff and young people appear to be strong. Young people stated that they enjoy living in the home and that they get on well with staff.

There is a clear behaviour management system in place known as 'Rules for Incentive' which all staff and young people are familiar with and where young people are rewarded for maintaining good behaviour. All staff are trained in the application of physical restraint although they will always try avoidance and distraction

techniques in the first instance. Any event where physical restraint is used is appropriately recorded and systems of support for staff and young people are put in place. The boundaries instilled by staff are professional, balanced and fair and sanctions are applied in consultation with young people and these applications are appropriately recorded. Young people are also supported in forming trusting and safe relationships with other adults within the organisation and the wider community. One young person attends local brownies and youth clubs and has had sleep overs in friends' homes which have been appropriately safety monitored. Young people learn to negotiate and develop confidence in expressing their views on aspects of how the home is organised and run. There are weekly house meetings where children can make their views known about a range of issues affecting their day-to-day living in the home.

Young people are provided with appropriate information on how to report any concerns. There is a recording system in place for logging any complaints raised by young people. No complaints have been raised by young people, parents or other stakeholders since the time of the previous inspection. Young people comment that they are able to talk with staff openly about anything that might be troubling them. All of these measures ensure that young people have a voice in the quality of their care and in the running of the home.

The home tries to ensure that young people become involved in community events and one young person has been actively engaged in charitable work by doing a sponsored 'Swimathon'. This helps young people to have a sense of responsibility for the community in which they live.

Management and staff ensure that equality and diversity is celebrated and valued, whilst being resourceful in challenging any form of discrimination. The agency has produced an information booklet on how equality and diversity can be promoted within their homes. High regard is given to young people's particular needs, arising from their personal circumstances and individual difficulties experienced. Staff work to meet these needs positively, with care, consideration and sensitivity.

Whenever possible, young people are encouraged to visit the home prior to their admission. This is used to meet with staff and the other residents, and to make early choices about the décor and furnishing they wish for their rooms and other elements of their proposed care. This helps children to settle in and feel involved in decisions affecting their lives. Young people's bedrooms are well decorated and furnished and they are able to display their personal effects. This ensures that young people have a feeling of ownership about the home. The living environment is homely and provides a reasonable standard of accommodation both internally and externally. Maintenance arrangements promptly address damage and breakages to maintain a safe environment. This ensures that young people enjoy a good standard of living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

safe.

There are clear systems and policies in place which are well implemented and which help to keep the young people safe. Young people said that they feel safe and are safe. Staff receive good training on safeguarding policies and procedures and this training is appropriately updated. Staff have access to clear information about child protection and safeguarding requirements and they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. The agency has a close working relationship with the local children's safeguarding officer and the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and this ensures that its knowledge and understanding of safeguarding children is continually being developed.

There is a close working relationship with the local police and this had led to a clear policy, procedure and recording method to be followed should a child be missing. This is known by all staff. Staff are very aware of each young people's vulnerabilities and are very clear what action to take should such a young person go missing. No children have gone missing since the time of the previous inspection.

There is a clear written policy on how bullying is to be addressed and a system for recording any such incident and the action taken in response. Children are never left unsupervised. There have been no recorded incidents of bullying since the time of the last inspection. Children report that they have not been bullied while in the home and that they are confident that bullying would be effectively dealt with by the staff.

All young people have a bedroom key. Young people's privacy in their bedrooms is respected whilst there are structures in place to allow staff emergency access to bedrooms and bathrooms should the need arise. Staff ensure that they do not enter young people's rooms without knocking. Young people's care records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. A good balance is achieved between respecting young people's wish for privacy, ensuring their safety and encouraging their appropriate participation in activities so as to promote social contact with their peers and staff.

Effective behaviour management systems are in place, which are rigorously monitored by senior management. As previously stated, staff are trained in a recognised method of physical intervention but the emphasis is on prevention and distraction to minimise incidents. Any such incidents are properly recorded and the actions taken in response. Young people and staff are properly supported following any such event. Detailed risk assessments are in place which direct and guide staff in supporting young people both within and outside of the home. For example, when young people travel to external events or activities. These are not restrictive and are planned to meet young people's individualised needs whilst at the same time keeping them safe.

Internally and externally the physical environment is safe, appropriately secure without being restrictive, and is well maintained. There are visits from suitably trained members of the organisation which ensure that the home meets health and

safety requirements. There are robust fire safety arrangements which include, staff and young people being familiar with the actions they should take in the case of a fire. Young people benefit from a stable staff team with few personnel changes. Staff are carefully selected and vetted and young people are included in the selection process as far as possible. Non-professional visitors to the home are not allowed unsupervised access to the young people. All of these measures help to ensure young people's safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed both directly and by senior members of the organisation. Young people receive a good level of care and support from a well-organised staff team. There are good systems of communication both within the management team and the staff group. Staff, social workers and families are well informed about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Placing agencies say that there is an excellent level of information communication provided by the home.

Staff receive good support and guidance from management through the provision of monthly one-to-one supervision and monthly team meetings. Staff are confident in the management support that they receive. There is a comprehensive staff induction programme and on-going training for staff in the core skills necessary for their role. The organisation has its own staff training arrangement which is organised by a director of the company and which is highly valued by the staff group. The staff team are well balanced with staff of both genders. The deployment and numbers of staff on duty at any one time is based upon the needs of the young people. The management team ensures that staffing levels take into account extra responsibilities, for example, when staff are representing young people at their looked after children reviews and attending school meetings additional staff are deployed. Staff receive training in all of the key areas applicable to their work with young people. Young people say that there is always enough staff on duty and that staff are helpful and available to deal with any concerns that they may have during day or night. Staff are supported in obtaining professionally recognised qualifications. Three of the care staff team are currently undertaking the minimum Level 3 qualification. The Registered Manager is currently undertaking the appropriate management qualification. All management and staff undertake an annual development appraisal which identifies their training and development needs. Staff demonstrate a wealth of knowledge about young people's needs. The skills, experience and backgrounds among the staff team are diverse and wide ranging.

The monitoring of care is undertaken via visits and reports required under Regulations 33 and 34 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Management are consistent in challenging and evaluating the operation of the service. The home produces a quarterly service review which it submits to the senior management group and which identifies areas of necessary service development. Outcomes for young people are central to management review which has led to changes in care practice. The statement of purpose is reviewed annually and clearly defines the aims

and objectives of the home. There are two children's guides in place for young people using the full-time provision and for children using the short breaks facility. The guide for short-term breaks does not include the contact details of the Children's Rights Director.

No recommendations were made at the previous inspection. Placing authorities express a good level of satisfaction regarding the leadership and management of the home and with the high level of care provided by the home for the young people placed.

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.