

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people of either gender with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by the local authority.

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 from traumatised backgrounds and with complex behaviours make steady and meaningful progress at this service. The strong emphasis on relationship building positively impacts on young people's confidence, behaviour and emotional resilience. Young people emotionally and physically thrive due to robust safeguarding, clear boundaries and making meaningful attachments with staff.

While some young people continue to experience education challenge due to poor psychological health, others do exceptionally well in school. These shortfalls in health and subsequent variance in education compromise the outcomes for young people. While the commitment of staff within the home is fully acknowledged and quality of care is judged as good, the outcomes for young people are judged as adequate.

There are exceptional safeguarding outcomes for all young people. They develop a growing awareness about their risk taking activities and how to make more positive lifestyle choices. Excellent multi-agency work leads to significant reductions in young people going missing from care and taking part in risky activities.

Young people feel valued and listened to because their participation is valued by the staff. Young people grow in confidence because they can make positive contributions to all aspects of their lives and the running of the home.

Leadership is effective, resulting in a very cohesive and proactive staff team. Making and maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships is a key strength throughout this service. Skills in building positive relationships result in excellent working

partnerships between staff, the majority of external agencies, young people, families and social workers.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
18 (2001)	ensure children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18. (1) (a))	31/01/2014
20 (2001)	ensure each child has access to such medical, dental, nursing, psychological and psychiatric advice, treatment and other services, as he may require. (Regulation 20.(2) (b))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home has good links with health agencies, including specialist services where appropriate, such as CAMHS and sexual health services. The availability of such services is taken into account when deciding on admissions (NMS 6.9).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people thrive and develop because they live in a nurturing environment. They experience a strong sense of self-worth because they live in an environment that proactively identifies, develops and celebrates difference. Young people feel looked after because they have better ways to stay safe and enjoy positive relationships.

Young people feel secure and trusted because of positive attachments with staff. They express that outcomes and future life chances would not be as positive had they not come to live at the service. Their comments include, 'I would not be the person I am now if I had not come here.'

The needs of young people are central to all staff practice. This child-centred approach gives young people a strong sense of security. Young people are enabled to make strong and meaningful attachments and more positive choices. Young

people are able to explore how they see themselves, relate to others and manage the challenges of growing up. Their positive progress includes better attendance at school, increased self-confidence, improved relationships and they are safer.

Young people develop better self-esteem because staff have excellent insight into young people's diverse and complex backgrounds. Young people feel better about themselves, because they are listened to and treated with a good sense of fairness and respect. These outcomes are exemplified by young people's comments such as, 'They don't judge me, they just talk to me.'

Some young people express their mental, emotional and psychological needs with significantly complex behaviours. Young people feel safe and cared for in the home because staff are extremely pragmatic and responsive to their complexities. However, external mental health agencies have been unable to engage with some young people. This has resulted in some of their complex mental and psychological needs not being addressed. As a result young people have not received the specialist and therapeutic input they require. These shortfalls result in on-going and significant behavioural difficulties. Such behaviours compromise some young people's potential to make social relationships, engage in education and make a full contribution in society.

This external shortfall compromises the otherwise good health outcomes for young people. Their health improves because staff support and guide young people about their lifestyle choices. For example young people have a greater awareness of healthy eating, exercise and maintaining good sexual health.

There is a significant variance in educational outcomes for young people. Some young people attend school and do extremely well. They enjoy school and are very proud of the improvements they have made in attendance. Their self-esteem is boosted because they are on par with their peers and look forward to completing GCSE exams. However some young people have poor educational outcomes because their psychological health prevents them from attending.

Young people enjoy a range of activities. Encouragement to take part in physical exercise helps young people to keep fit and their achievements include completing a bike ride over several miles. Young people also enjoy going to youth clubs, shopping and trips out to local attractions.

Young people benefit from having contact with family and friends. They enjoy overnight stays and sleep-overs at friends and previous foster carers' homes. Making and maintaining friendships and continuing previous attachments positively impacts on young people's emotional resilience and self-worth.

Quality of care

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

The extremely dedicated staff team place young people's needs and interests at the

centre of their practice. Staff present an excellent awareness of and sensitivity to the individual needs and wishes of young people. They are non-judgemental and this impacts in the ability of young people to express their individuality and share their concerns and worries. As a result young people develop good emotional resilience and a strong sense of attachment with staff.

Young people are consistently cared for. They thrive because frameworks for care planning, risk and behaviour management are comprehensive and effective. Care plans are meaningful to young people because the staff have an excellent understanding of young people's needs. The staff fully understand and respect the impact of young people's challenges and experiences.

Written care plans provide staff and young people with clear and practical strategies for support. There are on-going adjustments to care assessments and staff practice owing to young people's influence and involvement in their own care and in reviews.

Young people feel safe and cared for because staff provide structure and daily routines to support their needs and talk to them about their emotional well-being. The care framework is supported with excellent one-to-one working between staff and young people. Young people's records give meaning to their childhood experiences within the home and celebrate the progress they make.

Social workers and other professionals value the staff team's commitment to partnership working. The staff team is outward looking. They are adept in embracing and engaging agencies to provide more specialist support for young people. This work has resulted in very effective relationships with local schools, safeguarding agencies and some health professionals. However the service's commitment to pragmatic and creative partnership working is not fully embraced by the local authority mental health services. As a result some young people who are hard to reach and engage have not received an adequate response to their mental and psychological health needs.

Detailed and individualised healthcare plans ensure staff understand and promote the medical and health needs of young people. The clear focus on nurturing and monitoring young people's emotional health results in improved emotional resilience and self-awareness. Staff are proactive and do their utmost to liaise with appropriate health and advice agencies. Young people's health is promoted and protected with safe and effective procedures for the storage and administration of medication.

Staff work tirelessly to encourage young people to engage in education and enable them to overcome obstacles and challenges. They work closely with local schools and education support facilities. Staff and educational professionals are flexible in consistently trying to encourage young people with complex psychological and mental health needs to engage in education. A full range of alternative approaches and facilities for education include art lessons, singing tuition and attending one-to-one teaching sessions. These endeavours have still resulted in the refusal of some young people to attend education. Positively, the celebration of achievement is a key element within this home. All young people, irrespective of their educational

challenges, thoroughly enjoyed attending and receiving certificates at a recent awards ceremony.

Education professionals have attempted to facilitate a multi-agency approach to responding to the extremely complex needs and non-school attendance of some young people. However this inter-agency response has been compromised by poor attendance by local authority mental health services at professionals meetings. This lack of connectivity means key areas of young people's lives are not addressed and therefore compromises their potential to progress and learn.

The staff are proactive in finding and encouraging young people to enjoy and pursue a variety of activities and leisure opportunities. They are tenacious in looking for activities and interests where young people can enjoy themselves, develop talents and grow in self-confidence. Some young people have been supported with singing lessons, have enjoyed concerts and now take up more physical activities and exercise.

The staff provide practical and routine support to ensure young people develop independence skills. Young people are helped with budgeting, domestic and self-caring skills. The independence framework is effective as it has a strong focus on developing self-esteem, confidence and social skills. This ensures young people are more confident and reassured about coping when they become independent.

Young people are looked after in a homely environment. They respect the comfort and homeliness of the house and take pride in the upkeep of their environment. Involving young people in running the home equips them with good domestic skills.

Consultation with young people is clearly evidenced in the management checks and monthly checks by an independent visitor. They are aware of how to complain, have access to an advocacy service and are confident their concerns will be resolved within the home.

Social workers have a very positive view about the calibre of staff. Comment such as 'I really do not know another home that tries so hard. The staff go beyond what is expected and they are genuinely concerned on a day-to-day basis and consistently provide a high standard of care.' are testament to the commitment staff show to the hard to reach young people who live at this service.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is held in the highest priority throughout this service. Young people feel and are safe. There are exceptional improvements in their safety and welfare due to excellent inter-agency partnership, working with families and meaningful discussion with young people. As a result missing from care episodes and concerns regarding child sexual exploitation are significantly reduced. Comments

from police include 'Proactive and I cannot fault them' and 'they do everything they can to keep young people safe.'

Young people's safety is promoted with clear and robust risk assessment and management. The staff have good insight into the vulnerabilities and risks presented by young people. Comprehensive risk assessment and practical risk management promotes the safety and protection of young people. Individual missing from care protocols are in place and agreed with the police. Robust and effective responses from staff include immediate searches for young people and good liaison with police. On the few occasions when young people leave the home without permission they have been returned quickly and their welfare closely monitored.

Risk management strategies enable young people to safely explore the challenges of growing up and social networking. For example young people develop a good awareness of internet safety with clear yet negotiated agreements about computer usage and access to mobile phones.

Young people are protected with robust recruitment processes. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. All staff are trained in safeguarding children and young people. They fully understand their own, and other agencies, roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe.

Young people feel safe and are consistently reassured by how staff manage any concerns of bullying, both within and outside the home. Assessment of need and compatibility planning is key to exploring the impact young people may have on each other. Effective planning minimises any event of bullying in the home. Staff are also proactive in working with schools to ensure young people are able to resolve conflicts and feel safe when travelling to and attending education.

The staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. Behaviour plans are comprehensive and effective. Behaviour management positively impacts on young people's safety because strategies are directly linked to individual risk assessments. The staff have an excellent knowledge of how young people's previous experiences impact on and influence behaviour. Care and control is sensitively handled, with physical intervention seldom used and only as a last resort to keep young people safe.

Young people with considerable behavioural and emotional challenges make progress at this home. Staff are proactive and creative in their responses because they strive to explore and understand the reasons for behaviour. The dedication and commitment from staff enables a connected and sensitive response to some very challenging behaviours. Staff work together and in agreement with young people. There are very clear boundaries and expectations. A major strength is that strategies to maintain boundaries are sensitively and meaningfully agreed with young people.

Young people live in a safe environment. Health and safety checks are an integral part of the daily running of the home.

Leadership and management

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

Young people are looked after by a team of motivated and very dedicated staff. Leadership is strong and promotes a safe, child-centred and self-improving service. The staff team's energy and commitment consistently contributes to the effective care framework and outcomes for young people. Young people thrive and staff develop in this positive environment.

The staff are able to meet the needs of the young people because they receive regular and updated training. All the staff have a good level of knowledge and competency because they receive a supportive induction and are developed and challenged with regular supervision.

Effective staffing arrangements enable young people to make meaningful attachments with staff. Attention to gender balances, gender role models and relationships between young people and individual staff are used to maximum advantage. For example staff are allocated to certain shifts because some young people are more able to participate in activities or discuss matters of concern with certain staff. Using a range of positive male role models enables young people to perceive males in a more positive light. Some young people feel safer with older male staff and relate to a grandparent role model. This positivity helps young people to unravel their realities of past trauma and develop stronger emotional resilience.

Young people, families and social workers can access information about the home in the Statement of Purpose and a children's guide. There is also a strong emphasis on obtaining feedback about the operation of the home from these individuals. The manager and staff consistently strive to develop and improve the service. They work to reflect a wide range of views in the operation of the home.

This service is highly committed to ensuring young people's views and concerns are listened and responded to. Young people are encouraged and supported to use the complaints' processes, including facilitating independent advocacy. As a result young people have been able to represent their views about being placed at the home and now feel more settled in their placements.

Young people's welfare and safety is effectively monitored. Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development which inform the home's development plan. The manager has a good knowledge of the legal framework and carries out regular management checks. These checks, alongside monthly checks by an independent visitor, ensure a comprehensive audit against the requirements and standards set down for registered children's homes. There were no recommendations made at the last interim inspection.

There are good systems in place for staff to report and monitor incidents within the home. Patterns and trends in behaviour are monitored in order to promote a better

understanding of young people's behaviours and welfare. The manager and staff understand their roles and responsibilities with regards to notifying appropriate individuals and agencies. This knowledge promotes good inter-agency protection and safety of young people at the home.

The management team has an insightful evaluation of the homes' strengths and weaknesses. There is an energetic and constant drive for improvement and this is directed through a clear development plans for 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.