

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Denise Jolly
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately operated. The home is registered for three young people with emotional and 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**.

A qualified and experienced Registered Manager leads staff well to provide individualised and thoroughly planned care for young people who live at the home. Staff are highly motivated to work with young people to enable them contribute their views about their futures and to progress in all aspects of their lives. They are skilled in working with others who support young people, such as social workers and health professionals. This enables young people to experience improved outcomes in significant areas of their lives, such as increased family contact or reduced involvement in criminal activity.

Young people say they are very happy in the home. They say, 'Staff are brilliant, they are always happy to talk to you, and do their best to support you in making progress.' Staff use one-to-one sessions with young people to help them develop an awareness of factors that support or impede their progress. Staff say they enjoy working with the individual potential of each young person. They use a sensitive and nurturing approach to encourage young people to understand the barriers to progress, such as poor school attendance or limited social skills. This helps young people to exercise increased control over the choices they make to improve their lives.

Young people say they feel very safe in the home. Staff model the importance of tolerance and respect for young people's diverse interests and capabilities. Social workers say that staff are creative in identifying approaches with individual young people that helps them, 'to come a long way in their lives.' All young people attend college. They are working towards qualifications that will improve their prospects for future employment. Although progress is patchy at times, staff support young people

to overcome setbacks and develop new skills in managing their behaviour.

Managers and staff work well together to monitor and improve key elements of the service and are keen to secure progress. Arrangements for the supervision of staff provide effective support to enable keyworkers to develop detailed and individualised responses to the changing needs of young people. Managers use effective systems of consultation with staff, young people and all professionals who support them to inform the development of the service. Young people say they benefit from knowledgeable and supportive staff, who help them to engage in plans for the future direction of the home and help them develop skills that improve their opportunities to be successful young adults.

There are some minor shortfalls identified from this inspection. These relate to: the recording of room searches; staff's knowledge of up-to-date police protocols for young people who go missing; individualised staff training opportunities.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure room searches are carried out according to the homes guidance, particularly that the views of young people about the intervention are recorded, and any follow up work is completed (NMS 3.20)
- ensure staff working within the home know and implement the home's procedures for children missing from home with particular regard to protocols managed by the police (NMS 5.2)
- provide a good quality learning and development programme for staff to equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of young people, particularly with regard to drug and alcohol awareness, and the impact of specific learning needs upon the social development of young people. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people overcome difficulties and achieve positive change in their outlook and prospects over time. Placements are stable and all young people respond to staff that have consistently high expectations of them. Young people improve their social behaviour, participate in cooperative living and plan for their futures. Staff sensitively support young people to sustain relationships with their family and significant others when appropriate, for example, by supporting arrangements for them to see their extended family. Young people who live long distances from their families and friends enjoy planned visits together with staff. Young people benefit from this contact as it strengthens their sense of identity.

All young people attend local colleges. They are supported to manage setbacks, such as conflict with other students, by staff who encourage them to find more appropriate courses or placements. Young people say they progress because of staff's persistence and consistency of approach. Young people are proud of their educational achievements and they enjoy the praise for and recognition of their efforts.

Most young people make exceptional progress to develop a positive self-view. They develop an understanding of their emotional response to a variety of stressful situations. They develop a range of skills that help them to manage past difficulties and improve their self-control. Consequently, most young people have reduced their involvement in risk taking behaviours, such as being involved in criminal activity. They work with staff to identify their specific needs throughout their placement. They engage with keyworkers in one-to-one work to increase their understanding of risks and the impact of these. Young people participate in planning for their futures, including their transition to adult life. This enables young people to identify future goals as they begin to understand the impact their current behaviour has on their future prospects. They work hard to develop appropriate independent life skills, such as budgeting and shopping.

Young people say they feel very happy and safe in the home and that they benefit from staff who are interested in them and their individual wishes and views. They confirm that staff intervene quickly to ensure their well-being. They independently participate in a range of appointments, such as meetings with specialist protection workers or clinical health professionals. Most young people do not go missing from the home. For others there is a significant reduction in being missing and young people maintain effective communication with staff during their absence. This enables young people to return to the safety of the home more quickly as they respond positively to staff's concern about them. As a result, young people begin to recognise the importance of healthy lifestyles and staying safe. Staff help them to re-engage with their goals if they return to unsafe behaviours such as drug misuse.

Young people choose community based activities that enable them to keep fit or develop interests in a way that suits them. They say staff are interested in their activities and, for example, attend celebratory events or performances young people participate in. Young people work hard to develop their maturity by meeting with professionals to help them plan for their futures. They experience independent decision making by participation in such programmes as the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. This reflects growth in their self-confidence and ability to understand the importance of participating in positive activities in local communities.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from staff dedicated to understanding their individual needs and wishes. Experienced and qualified staff demonstrate consistently high

expectations for young people to progress. They skilfully support young people to contribute to their individual placement plan. Staff exhibit a commitment to achieving placement stability for young people and offer warmth and sincerity in their relationships with them. They use sensitive and supportive professional relationships to encourage young people to explore barriers to success that increases the risk of young people being involved in criminal activity, such as anti-social behaviour.

Staff help young people to reflect on past experiences, such as family breakdown, non-school attendance or harmful relationships. This means young people improve their self-awareness and have an increased capacity to sustain improvements in their lives. Independent Reviewing Officers said, 'Staff do not give up on young people, when other placements might have done.'

Staff help young people identify goals and actions required to progress in all aspects of their lives. All young people contribute to their placement review meetings and have greater confidence in their interactions with the range of professionals who support them, such as specialist health services or social justice advocates. Education support officers say, 'The home is fantastic, they work really well with any additional help provided to encourage young people to succeed in their education.' Young people provide monthly feedback to keyworkers about their plans and the general conduct of the home. Keyworkers respond by helping young people to identify resources particularly relevant to them. This results in a breadth of learning opportunities, from how to access sexual health services to opening a bank account.

Staff promote equality and diversity throughout service delivery as young people become partners in planning their futures, appropriate to their level of understanding. Staff model the importance of accepting young people as individuals while challenging and developing the aspects of their lives and personalities that hinder progress. Staff recognise the diverse needs of young people in care plans that provide opportunities for young people to develop relationships with culturally and ethnically appropriate role models. Professionals say that staff actively seek knowledge and resources that improve their understanding of how to support individual need. For example, young people with specific learning needs or behavioural difficulties integrate successfully into the life of the home and attend local colleges and activities.

All professionals and parents spoken to confirm that staff respect and value young people. They provide young people with positive and constructive models of communicating their views and challenge behaviours that harm. Over time, young people gain insight and skills to enable them to manage relationships more effectively. Staff support young people in developing and sustaining contact with their immediate and wider families, when this is appropriate.

Staff encourage young people to build bridges with neighbours and local resources. This works to good effect with positive comments recorded from those who appreciate the efforts made by the home to be good neighbours. Together staff and young people meet with the police or college staff to identify solutions to situations that prevent them from achieving their goals. As a result, most young people remain

at college, grow in confidence and maturity and therefore increase their opportunities to achieve as young adults.

Young people contribute to the development of the home by sharing their views and ideas in regular house meetings and one-to-one sessions. They say that they know how to complain, but prefer to talk to staff about any matter that concerns them because staff are good at responding to any minor issues that arise. Staff and young people work in partnership and this is evident in the excellent relationships demonstrated between staff and young people at the home. In addition, staff build effective partnerships with external agencies to ensure that regular planning meetings take place with all relevant persons present, such as education representatives and police protection teams.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel very safe and are exceptionally well cared for in the home. Staff understand and promote positive behaviour management of young people and include young people as they consider how to resolve any difficulties in relationships. Staff consider restorative justice solutions before measures that are more punitive but act swiftly to ensure the safety of young people. The home works well with external agencies, such as the police and youth offending teams, to inform and educate young people about the impact of anti-social behaviour on their future prospects. Through supported reflection and positive role modelling young people develop an awareness of the impact of their behaviour on others and acquire skills in realistically assessing risk when they make choices in their lives.

Staff do not use restraint. Regular oversight of records of all disciplinary actions means that staff complete accurate accounts of measures used to restore order and reduce risk to staff and young people in the home. However, they do not consistently: record the reasons for room search procedures; follow up with timely consultations with young people; record the views of young people about the impact of the room search. Although this has not adversely affected their welfare this means that young people do not contribute to a complete record of their time at the home and may not be fully educated to understand the impact of, for example, the health risks associated with alcohol abuse.

Managers employ staff following a rigorous selection and vetting process that ensures staff are suitable to work with young people. The human resources department for the home provides all essential recruitment records to the Registered Manager. Staff that are transferred from other homes within the organisation take with them relevant and up-to-date personnel records. This enables the manager to maintain consistent and effective oversight of any identified staff development needs to improve the safety and well-being of young people.

Staff are diligent about keeping young people safe and know and understand the procedures required to be implemented should any concerns arise. When young

people demonstrate unsafe behaviour such as being missing from the home, staff take immediate action to record and share their concerns. Staff are less confident with new police protocols for reporting young people who go missing as training is yet to be arranged. However, this has not affected the welfare of young people due to other reporting systems and responses that staff use while they become familiar with the newly introduced protocol.

Regularly updated and comprehensive risk management strategies, that include contributions from young people, provide clear guidance to help minimise the incidence of unsafe situations for young people. Staff promote clear and effective communication with all professionals and recognise the importance of this for young people who are placed far from home. For example, they record lists of known contacts for all relevant locations for young people at risk of being missing. Immediate risk responses are clearly identified in text that is suitably descriptive, to support out-of-area searches. This means more effective searches can take place for missing young people, who then engage in fewer periods of absence.

Leadership and management

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

A qualified and experienced Registered Manager leads a qualified, skilled and effective staff team. Together they provide excellent care that maximises opportunities for young people to be successful. Regular monitoring of the service by independent visitors on behalf of the provider and monitoring by managers enables the service to continue to develop and improve. Staff demonstrate a commitment to effective multi-disciplinary working to achieve the best outcomes for young people.

Keyworkers regularly review highly individual plans of care for young people. This provides an opportunity for staff to celebrate success with young people and to identify alternative approaches when young people do not attain their desired outcomes. Managers demonstrate clear expectations that all professionals work together in the best interests of each young person and actively pursue collaborative working and specialist professional help. This enables young people to benefit from relevant and progressive plans of care that protect them and ensures clear actions needed to improve outcomes as they transition to their adult lives are identified.

Staff say they are well supported by managers at the home and receive regular and developmental supervision. The manager receives good support and professional supervision from effective line management arrangements. Staff are currently engaged in a performance appraisal programme that supports individual development and underpins the future development of the home. Staff are universally committed to the progression of the service and have lots of ideas to further improve the lives of young people, such as enhancing the support available for family contact.

Staff recognise the importance of training in the development of their professional expertise. They participate in an organisational training programme that addresses

all mandatory areas of staff practice. However, access to specialised training, such as supporting young people with drug and alcohol awareness or understanding the impact of a specific learning need on the social development of individuals, is limited. This reduces the capacity of staff to provide immediately effective support to young people because they rely on the assessment and intervention of other professionals. However, young people remain safe and continue to progress due to the efforts of staff.

The manager further promotes development of the home and the quality of care offered to young people in regular staff meetings, where staff review the progress made by young people. They have reviewed the home's development plan to include actions directly relevant to young people, such as improvements to transition planning. The manager responds to any concerns raised by parents. Social workers say that the home demonstrates effective negotiation techniques when parents express their dissatisfaction with plans for young people. Staff promote open communication with families, while maintaining the agreed goals and programmes for young people. This provides young people with a consistency of approach that enables their lives to improve.

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.