

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning difficulties. The home is owned and managed by a private company.

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 well cared for by competent staff that have a good understanding of their needs and plans. Staff ensure that the care they give to young people is tailored to their specific needs. This enables young people to make good progress in all areas of their lives from their starting point on admission to the home.

Young people's health needs are well met and they are fully supported to have a healthy lifestyle. They engage well with education and consequently their levels of attainment improve. Care staff have a very positive view of the young people they look after and they work hard to develop good relationships with them. This helps young people to feel that they are valued and as a result they grow in confidence and self-esteem. Social workers and other professionals involved with the home are very positive about the impact the home has had on young people. One reported that the home 'offered the nurturing and support (name) required' and went on to say that 'placement at the home has been a significant factor in the improved circumstances and development of (name)'.

The home's arrangements for keeping young people safe are effective. Staff demonstrate a sound understanding of young people's vulnerabilities and have a good knowledge of safeguarding protocols and safe care practices. Consequently, they are able to ensure that risks are minimised and young people are protected. Young people themselves report that they feel safe.

The home is well managed. The manager provides good support and leadership to staff. She demonstrates a clear commitment to the continuous improvement of the

service for the benefit of young people. The management monitoring arrangements are effective, ensuring that good standards of care are maintained and the welfare of young people is promoted.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to an aspect of staffing and some missing information in the young person's guide.

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 young person's guide to the service contains the contact details of the Children's Rights Director Ofsted and the young person's Independent Reviewing Officer (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that all staff who are placed in charge of the home and other staff at particular times have substantial relevant experience of working in the home. (NMS 17.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people enjoy good health. They have a good understanding of health issues and they maintain a healthy lifestyle. They have a good daily routine, eat healthily and exercise regularly. This supports their general good health. Young people attend routine medical appointments which means that their health is monitored. Some young people have had a history of significant substance misuse before they came to live in the home and are being supported to remain drug free. This has a very positive impact on their health. Young people benefit from the home's arrangements for managing medication. These are robust, protecting young people and ensuring that they have medicines when they need them.

Young people attend their education provision regularly and engage well with tutors. This enables them to make good progress in education from their starting point on admission to the home. Young people make plans for their future employment and have gained places at college. This improves their chances in later life.

Young people report that they enjoy taking part in a range of activities in the community. They say that since they have lived in the home, they have tried a number of different things such as going to the gym, playing 'rugby fives' and ice skating. A young person said that they are looking forward to starting sessions at a climbing club and playing badminton and that they are interested in music, which staff are going to support by acquiring an electronic system for the home. Involvement in various activities supports young people's general development and

increases their opportunity to make social contacts in their local community.

Young people develop life skills by contributing to the daily routines of the home. They say that they feel they are learning how to be more independent. For example, they keep their own rooms clean and tidy, they choose menus and help to shop for and cook their meals. They also learn how to manage their money and to make their own appointments. One young person said that they were going to decorate their bedroom during the half term break, with the help of staff. Involvement in this type of activity helps young people to develop practical skills and also supports their sense of achievement and confidence.

Young people have a good understanding of their history and background. They have regular contact with relatives, which benefit them emotionally and helps to promote their sense of identity.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from being cared for in a nurturing environment. Staff are competent and have a good understanding of young people's needs and care plans. Young people report that they get on well with the staff and that they feel able to trust them. This contributes to young people's sense of security in the home and helps them to feel settled. This in turn supports their progress. Young people say that staff listen to them and they feel that staff are concerned about their welfare and want them to do well. This helps to develop their sense of self-esteem. They report that staff 'sort things out' for them and are able to identify things that have changed as a result of consultation.

Professionals and relatives make positive comments about the way young people are cared for. For example, a social worker said 'Care in the home is brilliant. I couldn't have asked for a better placement for (name)'. A relative said staff 'are caring for (name) fine - in fact excellent'.

Care staff develop very detailed plans for young people which are drawn from the local authority's care and placement plans. This ensures that staff are working consistently to meet young people's assessed needs. Professionals confirm that staff work well with the authority's plans for young people and keep them fully informed about young people's progress. Placement plans and progress reviews are written in a format that is easily understood by young people. This enables them to contribute fully to the care planning and reviewing process and ensures that their views are incorporated into their documents. Plans are kept up to date to reflect young people's emerging needs.

Staff ensure that young people have an education provision that is appropriate to their individual needs. Some young people have been out of mainstream school for a considerable time before they come to live in the home and in these circumstances, they can be tutored in the home for a time whilst a suitable setting is identified. Staff

value education and actively encourage young people to attend very regularly. They celebrate young people's achievements and help them to plan for further education and work. Consequently, young people are able to make good progress in education from their starting point on admission to the home.

Staff encourage young people to behave in ways that are socially acceptable, giving them incentives to support their progress and recognising and praising positive behaviour. They make sure that young people have clear and firm boundaries, working effectively as a team to ensure that these are implemented consistently. Young people report that staff are fair and treat them with respect. They respond well to the way staff work with them and generally behave well.

Young people benefit from living in an environment that is very well maintained and kept safe. Young people confirmed that they like their home and they take a pride in helping to keep it good order. The home is suitably located in a residential area that enables young people to have easy access to shops and education and leisure facilities. The manager and staff maintain positive relationships with neighbours. This helps young people to feel safe and accepted in their community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home's safeguarding arrangements are very effective. Staff are all trained in child protection issues and safe care. Consequently, they understand how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know how to manage and report concerns in order to keep young people safe. They develop detailed individual risk assessment and management plans for young people. These identify their vulnerabilities and record the strategies staff use to lessen risks and ensure that young people are protected. Plans are reviewed regularly to ensure they continue to be effective. Young people themselves say they feel safe in the home and that staff give them advice about how to keep themselves safe outside the home. Social workers and relatives also confirm that they believe young people are cared for safely.

Most young people rarely go missing from the home. However, the home has a clear protocol for responding to and managing these incidents in order to secure the safe return of young people if they do go missing. The manager and staff work very effectively with the police and the local safeguarding team ensuring that information about young people is appropriately shared so that they can be protected in the community.

Staff are all trained in behaviour management techniques, including in the use of restraint. However, this is rarely used in the home as the way staff work ensures that potentially challenging situations are defused before they escalate. There have been 2 incidents of physical restraint in the home in the past year. This contributes to young people's sense of safety in the home.

Robust staff recruitment and vetting practices ensure that young people are protected from unsuitable individuals gaining access to work in the home.

Young people benefit from living in a home that is kept safe. This is achieved through staff training and a rigorous system of health and safety risk assessments and checks. Young people report that they have taken part in fire evacuation drills and that they know how to leave the building safely in an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed effectively. The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and is registered with Ofsted. She provides good leadership to the team. She regularly monitors the quality of care in the home and the progress that young people make. As part of the monitoring process, the manager has regular discussions with young people and their families as well as with staff and professionals involved with the home. An independent person also undertakes regular checks on care in the home. The manager uses the information that is gained through this process of checks and consultations to inform the plans that are put in place for improvement and development in the home. No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection, but the home has a good track record of responding promptly to issues identified through the inspection process.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a team of staff who are committed and enthusiastic and who have a good understanding of their needs. Care staff are qualified or working to gain a relevant qualification. They report that the organisation provides them with good training opportunities. This ensures that they develop and maintain the knowledge and skills they need to care for vulnerable young people. The manager makes sure that staff are made aware of any changes to legislation to keep their knowledge up to date.

Staff work together well to ensure that there is consistency of care for young people. There is very good communication across the team, with regular team meetings and handovers at the start of every shift. These systems enable staff to discuss the care and progress of young people and the general running of the home. There are sufficient staff in the home at all times to ensure that young people are well cared for and supported at appointments and activities. Since the last inspection, there have been occasions when staff who had only completed a very short probationary period and who therefore had not been able to gain substantial experience of working in the home, had been left in charge of the home. This does not appear to have had a detrimental effect on the care or welfare of young people, but it does not meet the standard. Care staff feel well supported. They have regular supervision and there are frequent team meetings. These arrangements provide them with opportunities to discuss their own training and development needs and also form part of the management monitoring of the care given to young people.

There is a detailed Statement of Purpose that describes the ethos of the home and

how young people are cared for. It is made available to professionals, young people and their relatives. It is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains up to date and accurate. Young people are given a copy of the young person's guide before they move into the home. This is written in a format that is appropriate to the needs of young people and gives them clear information about the home and their rights in care. The guide does not contain details of the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted nor of the young person's own Independent Reviewing Officer. This limits young people's ability to make direct contact with these individuals if they wish.

Staff maintain detailed records about young people. This contributes to their understanding of their history and time in home. Young people are encouraged to read and contribute to their files. This ensures that they understand what recorded about them and that their views are also incorporated into their records. All information that is held about young people is stored securely to protect their right to confidentiality.

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.