

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Spruce
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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**.

This is a good home with areas of outstanding. The home provides well-planned, personalised care due to a dedicated and passionate staff team led by an enthusiastic and strong Registered Manager. Young people share their views and shape the home to reflect their individuality through consultation.

The home provides a safe place in which young people feel safe and are safe. Relationships develop on trust and the strength of the service lies within the commitment of the team. Staff are fundamental in providing success within transition planning and moving young people into independence.

Leaders and managers secure improvement by good development planning and show clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

There are some shortfalls within the service and as a result, two recommendations have been made.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure where there has been physical restraint children are always given the

opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner (NMS 3.16)

- ensure the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies and procedures, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends and that immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in education, despite the challenges they face, considering their starting point. Staff confirm some issues affect young people's attendance; however, they are soon resolved to ensure young people continue to achieve positive outcomes. Young people recognise the reasons why they are in care because they understand their background. As a result, young people develop emotional resilience that enables them to form attachments between themselves and others.

Some young people attend routine health appointments to improve and maintain good health. Young people know the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle because they make healthy choices with regards to diet and fitness. Some young people smoke and are provided with information to help reduce or stop the activity. Young people benefit from visits by the looked after children nurse to ensure all aspects of their health are being maintained. This means young people's progress is monitored and intervention provided where necessary.

Young people receive excellent support in preparation for a successful transition to independence and adult life. Staff continue to invest dedicated care and support to young people who have moved on to independent living. This means relationships continue and young people feel valued as individuals even when they are no longer part of the service. Staff say, 'Young people that have left have received support with disengagement and moving on; some young people have wanted to maintain communication with staff who they have had good relationships with.' As a result, young people are successful in moving on.

All young people benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. This ensures relationships continue to develop and strengthen.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from a dedicated staff team that develop strong bonds through trustful and honest relationships. Staff recognise the challenges that occur following

changes in placements. However, staff remain confident and vigilant in relationship building and as a result, bonds between staff and young people are strengthened.

Staff provide young people with opportunities to express their thoughts, wishes and feelings by using a less formal approach. Staff say, 'We value what young people say because they did not feel a formal meeting represented a normal way of living and felt it was a care approach. As a result, meetings are now less formal and friendly.' Staff empower young people who request more involvement in running the home. For example, young people choose the home décor and take part in maintaining the garden. This means young people significantly influence the running of the home.

Staff have high aspirations for young people and place them central to the care they provide. Staff balance equality well and ensure the diverse needs of individuals are met despite the challenges some young people present. Young people attend celebration events and receive awards for achievement in education. As a result, young people are confident in their success.

Staff confirm they do not give false hope where they are not able to meet the requests young people make. Staff say, 'We try to offer a compromise when requests are difficult to achieve and try to empower young people to make their own decisions and decide their outcome.'

Young people receive exceptional support from external agencies because staff build excellent relationships and challenge shortfalls. For example, staff advocate on behalf of young people where services do not meet their needs. As a result, changes are made to improve the quality of care young people receive.

Staff are consistently concerned for the welfare of young people. Young people benefit from robust placement planning that clearly identifies the individual support required. Staff are imaginative in finding ways to promote life experiences and go beyond their duty. For example, staff dedicate their own time and energy into supporting young people who have moved on from the service and additionally commit to self-funded training opportunities to enhance the life chances of young people placed within the service. This means young people continue to receive exceptional quality of care.

The home provides a healthy environment because staff understand the importance of maintaining a well-balanced lifestyle. Staff are proactive in providing support and advice to young people concerning all aspects of their health. Staff say: 'We support young people to attend sexual health clinics as part of their independence plan. Menu planning incorporates the 'eat well plate' and includes fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people get involved in cooking and recently made a potato curry cooked from scratch; it was lovely.'

Staff positively promote diverse issues such as sexuality, culture and religion. For example, staff assisted young people to purchase a specific outfit to attend a religious event that represented the faith. Staff say, 'There is a good balance of race, gender and cultural staff within the service and we are all treated equally without

discrimination.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff make safeguarding young people a high priority. Young people benefit from robust behaviour management plans and individualised risk assessments. However, some activities that young people choose to take part in do make them vulnerable and places them at risk. Vigilant staff monitor and evaluate young people's safety and take prompt action during times of exploitation or risk of harm. As a result, the safety of young people is protected as much as possible given the individual circumstance.

Young people are new to the environment and relationships are developing. Staff recognise the potential of peer domination and risks of bullying. Staff work closely with individuals and deal with disagreements sensitively in a manner tailored to the understanding of each young person. Staff say, 'Young people understand how to raise complaints or grumbles and the manager intervenes when behaviour escalates. This diffuses the situation and discourages hidden potential bullying behaviour. Ground rules are agreed with young people, that keep them safe from bullying.' Young people confirm they have a key to their own room and staff do not enter without permission. As a result, young people's privacy is respected and protected.

The home provides a good balance between sanctions and rewards to improve and promote positive behaviour. Staff recognise the importance of positive praise and develop effective strategies to reduce the need for physical intervention. Staff only use restraint as the last resort. However, it is not clear from the records if all young people are offered the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner following the use of physical restraint. This affects young people's rights.

Staff are passionate about the welfare of young people and work hard to work in partnership with the police and other agencies when young people go missing. Young people return from episodes of missing either by choice or under police escort. Staff use a welcome and friendly approach to reduce anxiety and support young people back home. Staff say: 'The relationships depend on how well you can find out what the trigger factors are when young people go missing. Sometimes, there does not appear to be trigger factors and it is difficult to establish without the trustful relationships.' Staff apply the procedure when young people go missing and clearly understand what the safeguarding issues are. As a result, young people are protected as far as practicable.

Young people benefit from a stable and committed staff group who are familiar with their needs and provide consistent continuity of care. The home provides a strong vetting process to reduce the risk of unsuitable candidates having access to young people. This helps to keep young people safe.

Staff are proactive in managing health and safety monitoring which further protects

young people, staff and visitors. This ensures the environment remains fit for purpose and is free from hazards.

Leadership and management

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

The strength of the service lies within strong leadership of the Registered Manager supported by a dedicated, committed and passionate staff team. The manager says: 'We have achieved very positive things with young people who have moved on due to enthusiastic, dedicated staff. There have been changes to new residents which have been difficult but staff morale has not been compromised because staff receive good support from me and each other.'

Young people benefit from a service that is child-centred in improving outcomes and maximising potential. Staff and young people express their views about the service and the manager acts on the feedback to improve the quality.

The manager evaluates the quality of the service through Schedule 6 monitoring and reviews of the Regulation 33 visitor reports. However, the manager has delayed monitoring some records but this has not compromised the welfare of young people. Young people continue to receive excellent quality of care because the manager tracks performance and identifies strengths and weaknesses to improve the quality of care.

Staff benefit from supervision, appraisal and personal development reviews to enhance and assist their learning opportunities. This maximises the quality of care young people receive. The home now benefits from a newly appointed assistant manager. This has improved staffing levels and provided the service with additional skill and knowledge to enhance service delivery.

All significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified to the required authorities. Staff are clear about what action to take and act accordingly. The home protects personal and confidential information and records are stored in suitable locked facilities.

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.