

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 home is operated by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties; it is operated in line with a clear therapeutic model. The organisation also provides a registered school around which its homes in this area are based.

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 **adequate**.

This inspection has taken place because the home was judged as inadequate at a previous inspection in July 2013.

Outcomes and quality of care for young people continue to be good. Young people with complex difficulties and challenges make meaningful progress at the home. They are nurtured and cared for by a very committed and responsive staff team. Staff are very knowledgeable about young people's needs, personalities and complexities.

Young people continue to receive personalised care and therapy at this service. Young people value their relationships with staff and engage with their therapeutic input. They address significant deficits in educational attendance and achievement. Young people feel supported in their transition from a challenging adolescence into young adult life.

Young people's safety continues to be promoted. Safeguarding procedures are greatly improved with rigorous improvement to the recruitment and vetting processes throughout the organisation. Young people's behaviour continues to improve and there is minimal risk taking activity by the young people living at the home.

Staffing and management arrangements are also improved. This includes more experienced staff working at the home and a new manager who is currently

registering with Ofsted. The manager and staff are optimistic about the improvements in the home. Sustained improvement and stability in the running of the service is at an early stage, but positive impacts for young people, staff and families are already emerging. Procedures and monitoring processes are yet to fully embed in the operation of the home.

Overall improvement in the home is reflected by only two recommendations being set as a result of this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- encourage children to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. Children are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe including outside the home. This is with particular regard to improving guidance for staff to practically manage the risks presented by young people; in conjunction with promoting young people's independence (NMS 4.4)
- continue to improve and demonstrate good recruitment practice, and all applicable current statutory requirements and guidance, in staff recruitment and carers selection. Ensure all personnel responsible for recruitment and selection of staff are trained in, understand and operate these good practices. (NMS 16.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress at this service. They enjoy living at the home and they make positive relationships with staff. Young people live in a very relaxed and comfortable environment; they grow and develop because they are nurtured. They are proud of their achievements and identify improvements in their behaviour, education and relationships with others.

Relationships with staff are very important to young people. They form positive and meaningful attachments and this is reflected in their positive perception of their key workers, improved relationships with families and forging new friendships with their peers.

Young people develop in adolescence because they live in an environment that identifies, develops and celebrates difference. They are able to explore how they see themselves, relate to others and manage the challenges of growing up. Young people grow in emotional resilience because they have excellent opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds and past experiences.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. Young people know how to complain. They feel listened to because key workers and staff make time to talk about their interests and concerns. Young people grow in confidence because they feel their concerns are taken seriously and their views are respected. This progress is reflected in young people preparing electronic presentations and chairing their own review meetings.

Education is a key focus for young people and they are fully engaged in and enjoy education and work. Their educational achievement and social development increase their self-confidence. They feel good about themselves because they learn at school and access further education and work experience. Young people say the home's education facility is one of their favourite schools. Parents are very positive about the improved attendance and achievement of young people. Other young people have done well at the home's school and they are now able to attend local college and do work experience.

Young people's behaviour is much improved. They appreciate and value the praise and rewards used to reinforce their positive efforts. They develop good independence skills and can budget, shop and cook their own meals. Young people develop confidence and they have good plans for their futures. They explore their potential and have aims to be a car mechanic, play football and save up to buy their first car.

Young people grow in confidence and take up a variety of interests in the local community, including a range of keep-fit activities. They develop new skills and interests such as football, swimming and going to the gym. Young people also use leisure time to make new friendships and therefore further develop their social skills. Making and maintaining friendships gives young people a good sense of self-esteem.

Young people enjoy good and improved health. They are supported to understand and begin to take responsibility for their health needs. Some young people have a developing awareness about how their emotional and mental well-being is part of their health and behaviour.

Young people also develop an understanding of how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. They develop a good understanding of how nutrition and exercise contributes to their good health. Young people are involved in choosing menus and cooking their own meals. They maintain healthy lifestyles in terms of exercise and improving personal hygiene.

Quality of care

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

Young people are cared for and thrive because there are effective frameworks for care, education and behaviour management. These systems and the good quality of care demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of young people at the service.

Young people are looked after in a well-designed and homely environment. They enjoy and respect the comfort and homeliness of the house. They choose items and take pride in the upkeep of the home. This investment in the physical environment equips young people with good domestic skills, useful in their independent living plans.

Young people grow up in a nurturing environment. Staff place relationships at the centre of their practice. Young people make positive attachments because staff have a sensitive insight into the personalities of the young people. The needs, individuality and backgrounds of young people are assessed in detail and reflected throughout their written care plans. Young people are supported with extensive independence programmes. The staff continue to work consistently to ensure pathway plans from placing authorities are also in place.

Young people are looked after by a motivated and energetic staff team. Their care is contemporary and individualised due to regular review and adjustment to care assessments and review of staff practice. The care framework is further improved with meaningful and relevant key working. Young people have records that link their support to their care plans and also give meaning to their childhood experiences.

Staff are committed to providing young people with security and stability. Young people are supported with effective working relationships between care staff, teachers, therapists and parents. There are stable care routines connected with consistent and quality time with staff. As a result young people are able to express their emotions, they learn to unravel the complexities of their behaviour and forge positive relationships.

The routines in the home and good relationships with parents fully support young people to attend and do well in school. Care staff consistently support young people in school and this has a positive impact on young people's ability to attend and do well.

Staff work consistently with young people and their families. Staff promote regular communication, facilitate meetings and enable young people to have a greater understanding of their backgrounds. This positive and meaningful connectivity results in significant improvement in young people's behaviour and self-esteem.

Staff also work tirelessly to explore and access new and challenging opportunities for young people. As a result young people become more confident and socially skilled. They make friends and embrace opportunities to join clubs and groups in the local community. For example staff and young people are currently exploring opportunities within the Prince's Trust.

Participation by young people is valued by the staff. Young people grow in confidence because they make positive contributions to all aspects of their lives and the running of the home. Young people's records contain information that reflects and values their individuality, choices and views.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home places a high priority on safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. This commitment is reflected in the robust steps that have been taken to address the recruitment and vetting shortfalls as identified in a recent inspection.

All recruitment and vetting procedures throughout the organisation have been both internally and independently audited. Remedial actions include improved training in safer recruitment and updated vetting guidance. These developments are most recent and are yet to fully embed in the services operated by the provider. Recruitment files checked on this inspection show young people are protected with effective recruitment, selection and vetting of staff in the home.

All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and those of other agencies involved in keeping young people safe. Staff are trained in child protection, behaviour management and health and safety to effectively promote the welfare of young people.

Safeguarding strategies focus on extensive and thorough risk assessment. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of how young people's previous experiences impact on and influence behaviour. Safeguarding strategies are appropriate to the significant vulnerability of and levels of risk presented by the young people living at this home. However the detail in risk assessments relies heavily on the assessment of need of young people. Strategies for staff to follow are not always written in a way that gives staff clear guidance about what to do should a risk arise.

Risk assessments effectively link into individual behaviour plans. Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. Young people are supported with detailed behaviour management plans. Their behaviour is much improved. These improvements are reflected in the significant reduction seen in young people's risk taking activities and challenging behaviours.

Behaviour is positively managed and reflected in positive consequences significantly outnumbering negative sanctions for young people. There are no physical interventions recorded in the home. Young people feel safe and appreciate the rewards and praise they receive for their improved behaviour.

Young people say they are protected from bullying. They develop skills in managing friendships and living with others as a result of effective staff support and intervention. Young people are able to better manage their behaviours, deal with conflict and forge more positive interactions with their peers.

Leadership and management

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

Since the last inspection in July 2013 there has been another change in manager at the home. There has been no Registered Manager at this service since April 2013. During the changes in management and fluctuations in staffing over recent months, young people have been well-looked after by a core of experienced and committed staff.

Staffing arrangements in the home are now much improved and a strong sense of cohesion within the staff team is emerging. While the manager had only been in post for three weeks at the time of this inspection; young people were benefiting from strong and strategic management. The manager's application to register with Ofsted shows clear commitment to the regulatory requirement to provide a stable management base in this home.

Staffing levels and consistency have improved with the addition of three experienced staff joining the core team. Young people identify a stronger sense of security. They are pleased the core staff team has been increased with staff they are familiar with and like. Staffing arrangements are currently managed to meet the needs of the young people and the home's Statement of purpose. Lone working arrangements are properly risk assessed and the new improved team of core workers facilitates positive lone working. Young people are able to spend one-to-one time with staff they are familiar and feel secure with.

Rotas show effective forward planning with consistent use of core staff. The strong sense of leadership provides staff and young people with security. Staff are motivated. They feel valued as they have already had a team meeting and received good quality staff supervision. The manager has implemented clear and strategic procedures for the administration of the home. Information for staff is provided through reading checklists and then reinforced within team meetings.

Young people are kept safe because there are good systems in place for staff to report and monitor incidents within the home. The manager and staff understand their roles and responsibilities with regards to notifying appropriate individuals and agencies. This knowledge promotes the protection and safety of young people at the home.

Young people are looked after in safe environment. Their safety is promoted with regular safety checks, including making sure young people and staff know what to do should there be a fire.

Requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed. Monthly independent monitoring reports are routinely submitted to Ofsted. Most recent reports, including the manager's monitoring report, show that any shortfalls and recommendations are being addressed; this demonstrates the service's ability to improve. Strategic development of the service is set out in a development plan, which includes input from the young people in the home. The new manager has embraced the role of leadership and is clearly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the service.

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.