

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nick Veysey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is one of a number owned and managed by a private organisation. It provides care for up to four 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 **outstanding**.

Young people live in an exceptionally supportive environment that enables them to achieve positive outcomes. They enjoy trusting relationships with staff. They have a strong sense of safety and are protected from significant harm. Staff actively and effectively support young people when they experience difficulties and struggle to manage their feelings.

Young people, families, social workers, independent reviewing officers and other professionals are exceptionally happy with the quality of care and the support their children receive from the staff. Young people's needs and views are central to the running of the home. Staff actively encourage all young people to become more involved in making choices and decisions about their lives.

Young people's care is effectively planned and put into practice. It is tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each young person and take into account their characters, needs and circumstances. Staff actively work in a coordinated way with young people, their family, social workers, health professionals and schools. They work hard to ensure that young people continue to get the right help, guidance and advice.

Staff are very committed and show a high level of skill, understanding and knowledge in meeting young people's complex needs on a daily basis. Staff have high aspirations for all young people and work strenuously to promote young people's personal growth, education, and social and emotional development.

The manager provides strong leadership and works hard to improve the quality of care and support. She fully understands the strengths of the service and effectively

uses the quality assurance systems to develop the service further. There is a strong emphasis on providing a very high standard of childcare practice. Although the manager routinely seeks young people's views about the running of the home and the quality of care, their views are not explicitly shown in her monitoring reports. This would provide clear evidence of how young people's views are influencing the development of the setting.

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 views and any concerns of children are clearly recorded in any monitoring reports about the quality care provided and the running of the children's home to show how seriously they are taken into account. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people are making exceptional progress in all areas of their lives. A young person said 'I feel that I have matured a lot since being placed here.' Young people are growing in confidence, feel emotionally secure, and are becoming more able to build and maintain suitable relationships with adults and other young people. They are making significant and continuous improvements in their behaviour, health and education. They gain confidence by taking part in a wide range of activities in the community, and are reducing risk taking behaviour. An independent reviewing officer reported that '(young person) is doing very well and achieving good outcomes in all areas of his life. He is showing much more maturity and negotiating well with both adults and peers, making great achievements in social and school life. He is on target in all his subjects, and his circle of friends has widened.'

Young people enjoy school and their level of attendance is excellent. They are making excellent progress in developing their knowledge and skills in a wide range of subject areas. They are very well settled in school, have made good friends, and take part in the life of the school, for example being on the school council and helping to coach basketball and football to younger children. They all work really hard, produce some excellent work and are achieving formal qualifications. One young person, for example, achieved a large number GCSE passes above the national average and is continuing her education at sixth form. From time-to-time some young people struggle in school, but this has not prevented them from attending and taking part in the full range of school activities.

Young people enjoy excellent health and improved health outcomes. Young people are taking more responsibility for their own health needs. They understand about the importance of healthy lifestyles and key health risks. As a result, they make positive

health choices that improve their own health, including eating healthier meals, getting fit through physical exercise and stopping smoking.

Young people maintain very good relationships with their parents and families through seeing them regularly, including where young people live far away from their families. The staff work very effectively with young people, families, social workers and support services to make sure that contact is a safe and rewarding experience. This promotes and builds young people's relationships with important people in their lives. Staff also ensure that the arrangements for seeing their families are consistent with young people's care plans.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide young people with a consistently excellent standard of care in a calm and supportive atmosphere. Young people's safety and well-being are central to staff's practice. They promote young people's welfare and enable them to achieve better outcomes. An independent reviewing officer reported 'the superb care provided (young person) with confidence and determination to get where she is today.' Another independent reviewing officer reported that 'staff are proactive in their approach and ensure practice is positive, consistent and child-focused. The Placement provides stability and consistency. Staff work well with him and seek his views on how to support him on a day-to-day basis. He responds to this approach and has good relationships with staff and peers.'

Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people to do well, and are committed to helping young people to lead safe, happy and fulfilling lives, regardless of the challenges young people and their circumstances may present. Staff have extremely positive relationships with young people and clearly enjoy spending time with them. They make every effort to find out what is important to individual young people, understanding their needs, culture, circumstances, talents and interests.

Young people's views and wishes are fundamental to the running of the home and the quality of care they receive. Staff enable them to play an active part in day-to-day decisions and more complex issues affecting their lives, including where they live. The provider and manager actively and routinely find out young people wishes and feelings about how they are supported, any worries they may have, and take them into account when monitoring staff performance and the quality and development of the home. Young people attend their review meetings and their views are taken into account, for example acting upon a young person's wish for more free time to spend with her friends and to have a mobile phone. Young people feel that the staff always listen to them and take them seriously. They feel able to make complaints if they need to and this will not impact negatively on the care they receive. A young person confirmed that the manager had sorted out fairly her complaint. Young people also know how to contact their social workers, independent reviewing officers, Ofsted and advocates if they have concerns.

Young people are very positive about how well they are being looked after. They feel that staff are interested their lives, concerned about their welfare and help them. A young person said that staff 'help me when I am angry and calm me down.' Parents and relatives, social workers and other professionals are also very positive about the quality of care and staff's ability to meet young people's needs and make a positive difference to their lives. A social work manager said, 'the home have being doing a really good job with the young person and they really supported his health needs when was poorly and needed time in hospital.'

Young people's placement plans are comprehensive, up-to date and consistent with the placing authority's plan. The placement plans set out the objectives for the placement, young people's individual needs and the support to promote and safeguard their welfare. Staff have a very thorough knowledge of the young people they work with, ensuring that young people receive very good individual support and guidance relevant to their needs. Staff put young people's placement plans into practice effectively. Staff's day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their diverse personal needs, including enabling young people buy and cook food from their cultural background, have magazines to read in their first language and keep in contact with their community.

Staff routinely monitor and review with young people their plans to make sure they continue to meet young people's needs and promote better outcomes. The manager and staff have exceptionally effective partnerships with placing authorities, health, education and support services. They actively look for services to support young people's specific needs and circumstances. A worker from the child and adolescent mental health service reported 'I valued the committed and enthusiasm which (staff) brought to sessions and feel that she was very quickly able to understand the reasons for the young person's behaviour and consequently rapidly develop ways to help him manage his feelings more effectively.' The manager and staff also effectively challenge any shortfalls in other services' practice to ensure that young people get the support they need; for example making sure social workers visit young people regularly and requesting planning meetings when they have concerns about young people's progress or the support they are getting.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They have very good access to a full range of health services. Staff have a very good understanding of young people's specific health and emotional needs. They provide excellent advice on health issues, including diet, exercise, sexual health and relationships and ensure young people's needs are met on a daily basis. They creatively promote healthy lifestyles by making physical exercise fun with a goal, and stimulating young people's interest in food constructively by encouraging young people to grow their own vegetables in the garden. Staff also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling poorly or have an accident. Staff have provided young people with lots of support and reassurance when they have needed to spend time in hospital. The arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective.

Young people live in a very stimulating environment. Staff actively promote young people's education and are successful in developing young people's opportunities to learn and achieve. They ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education and attendance. Young people have good access to plenty of books, art materials, games, computers and other educational resources. Staff actively encourage young people to develop their life and social skills and are making significant progress. Young people are successfully taking on more responsibilities and have every opportunity to build confidence in their skills. They routinely plan, shop and cook meals, cleaning, washing clothes, choose clothes and toiletries, and take part in gardening. Young people have chosen the colour schemes and helped to decorate and as a result gained skills that they will use when they have their own places. Also young people are encouraged to attend certain staff training courses and have gained qualifications in first aid. Staff have established strong links with schools and education services. They work effectively to challenge any barriers to young people's full participation in education and training; for example offering support to young people in school, and working extremely hard to get young people back into full time education. While young people are waiting for a new school, staff work with education services and the young person to provide them with a suitable education programme, including key skills, practical skills and enrichment through visits to museums and cultural facilities.

Young people live in a large comfortable family house. It is decorated, furnished and maintained to a very good standard and meets young people's individual needs, personalities and tastes. Young people's bedrooms were exceptionally tidy and decorated to a high standard.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment and are protected from harm. The staff consistently apply excellent safe caring practices. As a result vulnerable young people feel safe and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. The staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are very well trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and risks relating to child sexual exploitation. They know exactly what they need to do when they have concerns about young people and take decisive action to protect young people. The manager and staff have strong and effective relationships with safeguarding agencies and the police and report to them all serious incidents that may impact on young people's safety. They are good at sharing relevant information with other the agencies to identify specific risks; and actively contribute to the development of effective plans to keep individual young people safe. As a results the risks of child sexual exploitation have significantly reduced. However, staff are never complacent and are vigilant about changes in young people's mood and behaviour. A social worker reported, 'staff manage risks around child sexual exploitation well and have established links to supporting agencies. They are professional; very positive and

have good working relationship with the local authority.'

The staff ensure comprehensive risk assessments and plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and fully address young peoples' needs. They involve young people in devising the plans and encourage young people to let them know how best to help them feel safe. Staff work effectively and sensitively with young people to promote their personal safety. Some exceptional work is taking place with young people about sexual exploitation. The staff have a very clear understanding of young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and emotional maturity. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at home and in the community. The staff effectively balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.

Young people very rarely go missing. Staff are fully aware of the factors that may lead young people to go missing, including wanting to live nearer to family and friends, and have taken effective action to reduce the risk. When young people have gone missing staff have taken suitable action to find them, report the situation to the police and local authority, and make sure the police have a clear understanding of the potential risks to the young person's safety. Staff take the situation very seriously. They follow young people if they leave the house and try to persuade them to come back, actively search for them, visit places they may be, always go to collect them, keep in contact with young people, their friends and their friend's parents by telephone, and share information with the police effectively. Young people always receive the reassurance and support they need to be welcomed home safely. Staff record young people's views about what happened and why they went missing. This has helped staff to understand young people's reasons and provide appropriate support to encourage them not to go missing. A social work manager said, 'staff were really responsive and active when he went missing. They remained closely involved in daily contact with the police and his parents, keeping them up to date.'

Young people's behaviour is usually excellent and their behaviour has significantly improved over time. They get on very well with staff and each other. They benefit from a nurturing and structured environment where positive behaviour is actively promoted through praise and rewards. Young people feel fairly treated. The staff apply reasonable and consistent boundaries to help young people understand what is expected of them. Staff have an excellent understanding of the times and factors that contribute to young people becoming upset. They support young people very effectively to manage their feelings and frustrations constructively.

Young people are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a highly effective and efficiently managed children's home. Every effort is made to ensure they receive the best possible care to support their complex needs and promote their well-being. The Registered Manager is experienced and suitably qualified. She is a positive and enthusiastic leader. She promotes a strong commitment in staff to deliver exceptional childcare practice tailored to the personal needs of the young people. The effectiveness of this approach is very evident in the excellent progress young people are making.

The home shows a strong capacity for continued improvement based on its performance over the last two years. It continues to exceed the requirements of regulations and national minimum standards. The manager is never complacent and uses effective monitoring systems to understand the strengths of the service and identify areas for development. She successfully uses the development plan to make improvements to the service. She routinely consults with young people about their care and the quality of the home, as well as parents, relatives, social workers and other professionals working with the young people. Although she takes young people's views into account, the monitoring reports do not explicitly evidence young people views and comments to show how seriously they are taken into account.

Young people are looked after by an experienced and stable staff team with very competent and caring people. All the staff have worked together for some time. This continuity of staffing has promoted young people's attachments. The skills within the staff team match young people's needs exceptionally well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to promote young people's safety and welfare in the best possible way. Staff are very well supported by the manager. They have a very detailed understanding of their roles and responsibilities and the high expectations for providing excellent childcare practice. They routinely receive effective, professional supervision. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful. Staff are suitably qualified and receive high quality training to build their individual skills and knowledge relevant to the young people they are caring for and their specific needs and difficulties, including training in behaviour management, and child sexual exploitation. Staff effectively apply their learning to their day-to-day work with young people. Staff are also encouraged and supported to develop their skills and knowledge further by completing social work and management qualifications.

Young people's written records are a very detailed picture of young people's experiences and progress. They include a narrative of young people's daily lives, staff observations of young people's mood and behaviour and analysis of their progress. These comprehensive records provide an insight and understanding of young people's lives and contribute to the planning for their futures. Staff develop life story books, containing photographs, with young people that provide a clear picture of the experiences and achievements while living at the home. They provide an excellent source of discussion with young people about how much progress they are making and help them understand their lives. Staff encourage young people to read what is written about them and make their own comments.

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.