

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a range of children's services within a private care organisation. It is registered to accommodate 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**.

Young people experience a very good standard of care because staff provide consistency, stability and a safe nurturing environment. As a result, young people are supported to achieve good outcomes, particularly with regard to their education and preparation for independent living. The home works hard to ensure young people receive effective healthcare, assessment, treatment and support that reflect their particular needs. The home is particularly resourceful in managing a clear framework for behaviour while celebrating and encouraging appropriate individuality. Young people's behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are effectively supported. Highly personalised placement plans effectively capture all these aspects of young people's care. Priority is given to helping young people develop their sense of self-worth and to help them to maximise their educational and personal development. Young people's diverse needs are met because they are supported by an experienced and well trained staff team.

Safeguarding young people's welfare is placed at the highest priority both in terms of the health and safety of the environment and promoting their physical and mental well-being. Very effective internal and external monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance which helps to maintain the home's good standard of care and assists in promoting the ongoing improvement of the service. The home is very effectively managed, this has done much to focus the work undertaken and to place the young people at the very centre of the home's function. Staff acknowledge that they receive outstanding support, guidance and direction from the Registered Manager, who has transformed the quality of care young people receive.

The excellent, trusting and sincere relationships observed between young people and staff are based on mutual respect and honesty. Young people receive good ongoing care and support from a care team that are dedicated, hardworking and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for them. The home has an energetic, motivated and well qualified manager, who leads by example and is ambitious to achieve the best possible outcomes for the young people in her care. Rigorous monitoring of care delivery, through well-maintained recording systems ensures that both strengths and weaknesses are identified and effective remedial action is taken.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's life chances are significantly improved as a result of the care provided by the team working at this home. They clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists; these boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality. Young people enjoy positive relationships with the staff group, based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps them to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience. The competent staff team have successfully created a nurturing environment that has well-defined boundaries, but remains both homely and supportive.

Young people have ready access to all the primary health services they require. They receive the support and encouragement they need to access any medical appointments. Young people take an increasingly independent role in the provision of their own health care, as appropriate, in order to help them prepare for adulthood. Young people access any specialist health provision they may require including any support needed with their emotional health. They benefit from good support and education which improves their emotional and sexual health.

Young people retain strong links with their families and receive help to maintain or improve any relationships which may be difficult for them. This helps them retain an understanding and appreciation of their heritage and the key relationships they will require in later life. Young people are able to develop and maintain friendships outside the home.

Young people's attendance and achievement in education have both improved during their stay at the home. Young people develop aspirations and work hard to achieve these. Attendance at school or college is good in respect of all young people living at the home and they achieve good educational results. Their individual support needs are met in ways that suit them and they access additional support as and when they need it. Young people who are getting ready to move into adulthood receive good, individualised support which helps them make successful and smooth transitions into independent living.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between young people living at the home and the young people and the staff team are very good. Young people and staff are respectful to each other and this helps young people to manage their own behaviour appropriately. Young people feel comfortable at the home and understand that members of staff are there to help them. Behaviour management is proactive and positive. Sanctions are extremely rare as is the use of physical intervention. The home provides a warm comfortable and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally.

Young people have a significant say in their own care and how the home is run. This ensures that their views are heard and helps them learn how to make good decisions about their lives and future. The quality of relationships in the home and its way of working with young people promotes their involvement and helps them become more responsible for their own lives. Each young person has a key worker, who they meet with regularly, to ensure that they have the opportunity to express their views. Young people also attend regular house meetings. Key workers discuss young people's achievements with them as well as any key issues they are facing or any problems they have. This helps inform the home's effective placement planning for young people and ensures that the care provided is focused on young people's needs.

The home, where appropriate, works very positively and proactively with young people's families and develops good working relationships with them. This further enhances the quality of the care provided to young people. The effective liaison with young people's social workers and relevant external agencies ensures that their needs are identified and are addressed. The home works sensitively with young people's individual needs providing inclusive, support which reduces the potential for discrimination. Cultural needs are effectively met and young people are helped to develop their own sense of identity.

The home provides young people with good support for their health needs. All young people are registered with local doctor and dental surgeries, and have regular access to an optician. Medication is safely stored and administered. All staff are trained in the safe administration of medication and in how to deliver basic first aid. The home provides young people with appropriate support and advice regarding their emotional, physical and sexual development and has developed effective links with external agencies to support this process.

Staff are aware of each young person's strengths and they provide a very supportive environment in which they can develop their independence and learn new tasks. Members of staff display an enthusiastic and committed approach to caring for young people. They offer advice and support on how to stay fit and well. Members of staff encourage young people to lead an active life and to take regular exercise. Young people receive a varied diet with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, which helps to keep them healthy. There is a good approach within the home to promoting the health and well-being of young people.

The home works effectively with schools and other agencies to help young people get the education they need. Young people are supported and encouraged to attend regularly and to achieve to the best of their ability. Staff have high expectations of young people and this encourages young people to have high, but realistic aspirations. Staff provide structured support with young people's education including helping with homework. This helps support the impressive educational successes being achieved by the young people at the home.

Young people enjoy living in a rural area. The home provides transport so that young people are able to participate in a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise, enjoy a meal together and talk informally. This helps young people to develop their confidence and social skills.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel very safe at the home and they are happy that the staff promote their safety. The home has a very comprehensive set of individualised assessments of risk for the young people in residence. These cover aspects of their potential behaviour, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake. Risk assessments are proactive, identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these.

Young people understand that the boundaries in place are there to ensure their safety. They are invited to sign all records relating to the use of sanctions, which helps them develop understanding and responsibility. The use of sanctions is fair and consistent. Staff work hard, guided by other relevant professionals, to enable young people to moderate and improve their behaviour. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours identified as being unacceptable. This enables young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact more positively with the wider community.

Young people confirm that staff use physical interventions infrequently and only as a last resort, when necessary to ensure the safety of all. Most issues are resolved by the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. The home's manager monitors each intervention, ensuring that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and comprehensively recorded. She also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, receive any medical attention if required or requested and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed.

Staff receive regular and wide-ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they

demonstrate a good understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officers, ensures the continued development of staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection issues. The episodes when young people are missing from care have reduced, to the point where there has been only one such incident since the last inspection. Clear boundaries are set and included in each young person's behaviour management plans. Staff are aware of these plans and follow them consistently.

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering such issues as prevention of bullying, complaints, safeguarding and behaviour management. Staff have a good knowledge of these policies and they are effectively implemented. Staff receive comprehensive training with regular updates in all these areas, which enables them to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. The regular and effective monitoring of the home's records and staff practice contribute to ensuring that young people receive safe care in line with their individual needs.

The home has a vigorous health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales set by the relevant regulations. Good staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection, recruitment and retention of staff. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Registered Manager provides excellent leadership and support to the staff group. This means they provide consistent high quality care to the young people living in the home. Open and honest dialogue helps young people learn from their mistakes. Consequently, young people make significant changes in the way they react to others and in the choices that they make. The promotion of equality and diversity is very good. There is strong, visible leadership which promotes high quality care and positive outcomes for young people.

Staff have excellent support and guidance through a clear management structure. This structure is successful at meeting the service's aims to foster social awareness and mutual respect within the home and wider community. It achieves this by encouraging a happy and caring atmosphere in an extremely professional and motivating environment. Consistent and regular supervision, coupled with team meetings, provide staff with excellent opportunities to formally discuss their role, their professional development and the impact of working with young people with complex needs.

All staff members comment positively about the manager's commitment, child-

centred approach, staff support and clear monitoring processes. Clear lines of accountability in the home enable a stable and structured environment for young people. Staff duty rotas and staff deployment confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times. The home has a very good complaints system which is clearly and effectively communicated to the young people. No complaints have been made since the home's last inspection. Young people confirmed that they know how to complain and that they feel confident that any such complaint would be dealt with properly.

The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. The Statement of Purpose clearly describes the skills, qualifications and experience members of staff have in looking after young people. The young people's guide to the home is clearly written and provides important information, which young people may need. Young people know what they can expect from living at the home and who they can speak to if they are worried about anything.

Staff are provided with quality induction and further training, support and resources and therefore understand the developmental needs of young people. The excellent training covers all mandatory areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management and first aid. The staff have a strong focus on promoting positive outcomes and to enhance the well-being of young people. The staff work proactively to help young people overcome barriers and to succeed. Good communication between staff ensures that young people's individual needs are consistently met. Young people take an active part in the running of the home and they are encouraged to make their views known, through discussions with staff and by attending house meetings. Staff ensure that a safe, secure and nurturing environment is maintained which assists young people to make real progress and to fulfil their individual potential.

The manager has established rigorous internal quality assurance monitoring systems. It is clear that all reporting systems are checked regularly and comments made if any record fails to meet either the home's policies and procedures or national regulations. Regular internal monitoring reports are produced which help the home to develop its practice and ensure that young people are receiving the care and support they need. Regular Regulation 33 visits take place to provide additional quality assurance mechanisms and involve consulting young people, wherever possible. The managers have a strong commitment to meeting young people's needs. The level of progress young people have made despite their complex needs is a testament to the impact the managers have made to help young people aspire, irrespective of their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or faith.

All recommendations made at the home's last inspection in January 2012 have been effectively addressed. The home has been partially redecorated and now provides a more comfortable and homely environment, that is consistent with a domestic setting. The home has now produced a comprehensive development plan designed to ensure continued improvement based upon the homes track record, continual staff training and ensuring that the physical environment is maintained to a high standard. Records are clear, up to date and stored securely, and contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their life in care, if they choose to access these

documents. All significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authorities and appropriate action is taken following the incident; this ensures the safety of young people.

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.