

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Bacon
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated 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 make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development. They benefit from a committed staff team who are well supported and trained in their work. Young people have formed very strong relationships with the staff; this ensures there is effective support, enabling young people to develop socially and emotionally. One young person commented 'They take good care of us, they are very caring and when you do good stuff they are really buzzin about it.'

Young people confirm that they feel safe and are safe. They experience placement stability which strengthens their feelings of safety and security. The manager and staff work in partnership with external agencies to ensure young people are receiving the support they need to develop to their full potential.

The home is well managed with a core staff team who are experienced to meet the needs of the young people. Staff demonstrate the positive impact they have made to young people's lives. However, there are some shortfalls: consultation with young people, their placing authorities and those significant to them is not effectively used in the monitoring of the home. The restraint records do not clearly record the techniques used to divert young people away from negative behaviour. Furthermore, staff would benefit from some training in recognising and responding to incidents of bullying and staff do not consistently sign their supervision records. Nevertheless, these are not having a direct impact on young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the wishes, feelings and views of young people and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure staff in the home are trained to recognise and deal with any indications or incidents of bullying, to proactively and intervene positively, engaging with those who bully as well as those who are bullied (NMS 3.12)
- ensure supervision records are signed by the supervisor and member of staff at the end of the supervision (NMS 19.5)
- ensure entries in records are legible and clearly expressed, specifically that the restraint record uses plain language. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make excellent progress in developing a positive self-view and emotional resilience. Life story work helps them to understand their background and the reasons for being looked after. Placing social workers say they are very pleased with the progress young people have made since moving into the home.

Young people are supported to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They understand the benefits of a healthy diet and engage in regular exercise, such as swimming and walking. They also have very good access to a full range of health services, including the child and adolescent mental health service, the looked after children's nurse and other service providers. This ensures young people's emotional and physical health is good.

The educational attendance and attainment for young people is extremely good. Young people's school reports and certificates are well maintained in their files, so that they have a clear record of their achievements. This ensures young people view their education as important and gives them a real sense of achievement. One placing social worker commented '(young person) is thriving in school; the transition plan was really good.' All young people take part in community activities, such as scouts, sea cadets and youth clubs. This means they are provided with opportunities to make friends in the wider community as well as building their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their family and other important people in their lives. Staff recognise this can be a difficult and distressing time for some young people and help them to deal with this positively.

Young people are provided with the opportunity to develop their independence skills, in line with their age and understanding. They are encouraged to keep their bedrooms tidy as well as helping with the shopping and food preparation.

Quality of care

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

Young people have formed positive relationships with the staff and each other. One young person commented 'Staff are fair and we are all treated the same.' On occasions there is bullying between the young people which staff challenge. However, staff have not had any training in recognising and dealing with incidents of bullying.

Staff practice is very child focused and young people thrive in a nurturing environment because staff have a good understanding of young people's individual needs. One placing social worker commented 'This is a positive placement and they work well with us.' Another social worker said 'I can't praise them enough.' One young person said 'I can talk to any of the staff', and another remarked 'The staff help me in all sorts of ways.' Young people know staff have high aspirations for them and as a result feel valued as individuals.

Young people know how to complain and are provided with clear information about the complaints procedure within the young people's guide. In addition they are encouraged to express their views about the home in the young people's meetings and their individual key worker sessions. Some young people also have an independent visitor which means they have access to independent support should they need it.

Young people are well cared for in line with their placement plans which clearly identify their personal needs. These plans are regularly reviewed to evaluate progress and ensure young people's needs are fully met. A consultant child therapist regularly attends staff meetings to provide support and guidance regarding young people's emotional and behavioural issues. In addition staff work well with other agencies to ensure the needs of young people are met.

Staff ensure the home's daily routines support young people's participation in education. For example, they transport them to and from school as well as ensuring they complete their homework on time. In addition the staff work closely with education staff to challenge any barriers to young people's participation in education. They also attend parents' evenings to ensure young people are making progress and address any concerns. This reinforces to young people the importance of education.

Young people live in a well decorated and furnished home that is maintained to a high standard. There is good access to local shops and amenities. All young people have their own bedrooms which they are encouraged to decorate to their own tastes.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm they feel safe and protected from harm. Staff are trained in safeguarding and have a good understanding of safe care practice. Staff are aware of young people's vulnerabilities and risks; young people's individual 'stay safe' plans clearly identify those risks and outline strategies to be used for ensuring their welfare is protected.

The home works in a coordinated way with other safeguarding agencies to manage any potential risks for young people effectively. As a result, young people going missing from the home and engaging in criminal activity is not currently an issue. One placing social worker commented that the home safeguards her young person very well. One young person also said the home has provided them with a mobile telephone so staff can keep in touch when they are away from the home; this additional measure helps to keep young people safe.

Staff are trained in behaviour management, including the appropriate use of restraint. They use incentives and rewards charts to encourage positive behaviour, as a result young people are learning to manage their behaviour effectively. Young people benefit from a staff team who provide clear and consistent boundaries. Young people confirm staff only use restraint as a last resort. However, the restraint record does not use plain language to describe the techniques used by staff to defuse challenging situations; instead staff use phrases such as 'hurdle help' and 'directive statements.' This means it is not clear what specific interventions were used before restraint became necessary.

Young people are protected, as far as is possible, by safe recruitment and vetting procedures to ensure they are only cared for by suitable people. In addition young people are further protected by good health and safety procedures in the home. Regular fire drills ensure young people and staff know how to evacuate the building safely in the case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed. The Registered Manager is currently undertaking a level 5 qualification in management to ensure they are suitably qualified. The home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose, and young people and their social workers are extremely positive about the quality of care. The home demonstrates the positive impact they have had on improving outcomes for young people.

There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty at all times to care for young people. Staff are suitably qualified; with those newer members of the team working towards the level 3 Children and Young People Diploma or completing the organisation's induction programme. Staff have access to training that ensures they have the right

skills to effectively support young people. Staff confirm they are well supported by the manager and receive regular supervision. However, they do not consistently sign their supervision records to confirm the accuracy of these records.

The one recommendation from the last inspection for the home's regulation 34 reports to be sent to Ofsted, has been addressed. This ensures Ofsted has proper oversight of the service between inspection visits. Overall the internal and external monitoring of the home is good. The regulation 33 visitor does consult with the young people to obtain their views and opinions about quality of their care; however, young people's views and opinions are not consistently reflected in the report. Additionally, the manager seeks feedback from other agencies in the form of questionnaires on the quality of care. However, the regulation 34 reports do not reflect on this feedback. This means the opportunity to demonstrate the views of others have improved practice in the home is excluded in these reports.

Young people's written records are securely stored and contain up-to-date information about them. The home has a system in place to notify Ofsted and any other relevant authorities of any significant events to ensure the welfare of young people is fully safeguarded.

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 children's homes.