

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lewis
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a private home. It is registered to accommodate up to three children and young people with emotional or 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 live within a consistently good home, which values them as individuals and nurtures their strengths. Young people are making good progress in relation to their starting points; Young people are happy and very satisfied with the quality of care. The stable, competent staff team effectively provide highly personalised support tailored to each young person's individual needs. The home works exceptionally well with young people who have a history of multiple placement breakdowns. Staff in the home demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practices. Young people feel safe and there is a significant reduction in missing episodes. Young people benefit from the caring consistent approach to behaviour management. Leadership and management arrangements are strong, there is a passionate commitment to improving young people's lives and securing positive outcomes. Two recommendations are being made to further improve practice. These relate to formalising the staff training programme and ad hoc staff supervision arrangements. Details of the staff training programme and informal staff supervision are not currently available in a written format.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- produce a learning and development programme (NMS 18.1)

- ensure a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the time and date and length of each supervision held for each member of staff. (NMS19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people state that they are 'happy' and that they are learning to 'feel better' about themselves. They value the positive impact living at the home is having on their lives.

Young people are successfully progressing in various areas of their lives; this is commendable due to their low starting points. There are significant achievements in relation to their personal development and emotional well-being. Young people are more confident, have increased self-esteem and self-resilience. Young people are taking greater pride in their appearance, have greater social skills and have positive aspirations for the future. Young people are building secure attachments and developing strong bonds with staff. This also extends to their parents as they rebuild previously strained relationships. Young people appreciate the ability to safely explore their feelings and have insightful discussions which enables them to make sense of their past.

Young people have the opportunity to engage in activities, which are meaningful to them. Individualised activity budgets enables them to pursue their interests, hobbies and talents. Examples are going ice skating, to the zoo, go-karting and away on holiday. Young people take responsibility for their health. This involves registering with the local doctor, attending general appointments, pre-natal care and engaging in mental health services. Young people are addressing their sexuality, sexual health and have an increased awareness of their vulnerability in relation to sexual exploitation. Young people understand the consequences of smoking, taking drugs and misusing alcohol. Young people understand the value of education and the majority of them are attending school regularly. Young people are achieving and are encouragingly ambitious, an example being taking their GCSE's early.

Young people take an influential role in the running of the home. They participate in house meetings, where they collectively share their views on care planning, behaviour management, the environment, activities and the quality of care. An example of their influence is the removal of particular posters, to make the premises less institutional. Young people know how to complain and use the procedure to address concerns. The home effectively manages complaints; this confirms young people are listened to. Young people keep in contact with their family and friends. They entertain their family and friends within the home; this includes cooking meals for them and including their favourite items in the home's shopping list. Young people also enjoy fun activities with family members which includes days out and holidays. Staff facilitate supervised contact, as directed by the young person's placing authority.

Each young person learns appropriate skills to enable them to make a successful transition into adult life. Interpersonal skills include learning to understand themselves better and develop a positive self-view. Young people learn to work on their own prejudices and their inappropriate use of offensive language. Young people plan to pursue further education and this includes going to university. Young people cook for themselves and are able to prepare traditional culturally reflective dishes. They plan their own individualised menus and take responsibility for their own household chores. This includes keeping their room clean and undertaking their laundry. Young people learn good financial management and budgeting skills. They enjoy going shopping and purchasing their own clothes. Young people benefit from the home's strong emphasis on saving, which enables them to have a substantial amount of money when they move on.

Quality of care

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

Young people describe the home as 'good' stating that they 'like the people' and 'everything is all fine'. Young people joke that 'staff should have a pay rise'. The home prides itself on the holistic work they undertake with young people and having a 'partnership of care' with professionals and relatives. Staff actively advocate for young people to ensure decision making promotes their best interests. This includes liaising closely with schools, placing authorities, involved professionals and attending relevant meetings. The home is very successful in rebuilding relationships between the young person and their parents. Where possible, this means a young person can return home after a period of time.

Young people benefit from constructive relationships with staff. Young people actively engage in informal counselling and key work meetings. This enables them to meaningfully address a broad range of issues, which includes parenthood, their heritage, anger management and taking responsibility. Staff nurture young people's strengths and work with them to assist in maximising their potential. Staff act as positive role models and help young people understand gender dynamics.

Placement agreement meetings ensure young people's needs are at the heart of all care planning. These meetings clearly detail how the home will meet the young person's respective needs.

Care plans detail young people's health, cultural, educational, behavioural, racial, faith, gender, sexuality and linguistic needs. Key workers work with young people to effectively address their goals and areas requiring further development. Structured key work meetings have a concise agenda and include the exploration of equality and diversity issues. Care plans are unique to each young person and subject to regular reviews. Social workers receive and appreciate regular written progress reports. They describe these reports as being 'quite handy'.

Young people receive good health support. Staff appropriately refer and liaise with health professionals. Staff competently manage a wide-range of health conditions. The home has a proven track record of successfully working with young people who

have complex emotional and mental health needs. Staff actively promote a healthy lifestyle. Young people receive encouragement to eat a healthy diet and undertake regular exercise. The home caters effectively for young people's dietary needs and preferences. Young people describe the food as 'good' and 'nutritious'. They enjoy balanced meals from a variety of cultures.

Young people reside in a clean, comfortable modern home, which blends easily into the residential neighbourhood. Young people have keys to their own bedrooms. Each bedroom is suitably furnished with satellite television. Young people are able to relax in the lounge which has a dining area; here young people can watch television or use the computer. The home provides young people with a selection of books, board games, a keyboard and games consoles. Young people can also spend their leisure time in the conservatory. During warmer weather they can also sit on the outdoor furniture in the paved back garden.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people state that they 'feel safe and secure'. There are no issues with bullying. There has been a significant reduction in the incidence of young people going missing from care. These episodes are mainly unauthorised absences and staff keep in constant communication with young people. If necessary they go out looking for young people and routinely book transport for them to safely return home. Young people benefit from the home's efficient safeguarding arrangements. Staff actively instigate strategy meetings. They positively contribute towards these meetings and are influential in action planning. Staff receive safeguarding training and understand their duty of care. There is a good understanding of child sexual exploitation and staff effectively highlight the dangers to young people.

Young people are making good progress in controlling their moods and acknowledging that they may have an anger management issue. Comprehensive risk assessments and behaviour support plans are regularly updated. These documents include strategies for managing young people's presenting difficulties. Staff use a wide range of initiatives to promote positive behaviour; these include a motivational model, timeout, withdrawal from a situation, humour and increased staffing. Staff focus on rewarding good behaviour and consistently giving praise and encouragement. Young people respond well to the home's reward system and enjoy earning additional monies. When young people display challenging behaviours they are aware that there are consequences. Staff occasionally have to issue sanctions and in very serious instances there is police involvement. Staff do not use restraints and focus on non-physical interventions.

Young people understand the importance of health and safety within the home. They participate in fire drills, which are held at various times. Young people understand the need to promptly evacuate the building. The regular fire alarm tests and risk assessments contribute to good fire and general safety arrangements. Certificates also verify the safety of the environment. The home has a very stable staff team;

there has been no new employees since the last inspection. There are robust recruitment procedures ensuring unsuitable people do not work with young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people describe the home as 'a very nice place to stay' and 'staff are really nice'. Parents comment on the 'very nice staff'. Social workers are thankful to staff for 'all their 'hard work and commitment' and making young people 'feel part of the family'. The home has a clear Statement of Purpose, which outlines the home's aims and objectives. There is a wish to provide a small foster family-like care environment. On admission young people receive a good induction, which enables them to have a valued understanding of the home's expectations. The home works exceptionally well with young people who have a history of multiple placement breakdowns. There is a strong desire to give young people emotional stability.

The leadership and management within the home is described by staff as being 'on point'. This viewpoint is echoed by professionals who state they are 'very impressed' with the home's 'work and vision'. There is a good understanding of the home's strengths and areas for further development. The home is responding to market changes and the service development plan includes working more therapeutically with young people. Staff maintain comprehensive records that they store securely. Records clearly outline young people's progress and how staff intervention adds value to their lives.

Young people benefit from high staff retention rates, which enables good continuity of care. Staff are qualified for their role and some exceed the necessary level of vocational training. Staff receive on-going support to fulfil their role. This consists of relevant training, team meetings and appraisals. The home has informal arrangements in place regarding training and staff supervision. The staff training programme is not available in a written format. Staff have regular group supervision and informal one to one supervision; records are not available for these informal discussions. Staff confirm that they feel supported and records demonstrate that they are happy with the supervision arrangements. The national minimum standards highlight that a written record should be kept by the home, detailing the time date and length of each supervision.

Young people reside within a home which has a good quality assurance system. This includes evaluating the quality of care in accordance with regulations and the use of satisfaction questionnaires. The home regularly seeks feedback from young people, their parents and placing authorities. Young people have the opportunity to formally share their views regarding individual staff members as part of the appraisal process. The home is a learning and development centre and offers a good apprenticeship scheme in conjunction with a college. This provides a valued introduction into a career in social care for a young adult. Young people benefit from this as they have access to a younger staff member, who is closer to their age.

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.