

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Coulter
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a private children's home that is part of a national organisation and provides care and accommodation for five young people who have emotional, behavioural and educational difficulties and attend the associated residential special school.

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 benefit from good quality care and consistent support from a well-motivated group of staff and respond positively to the care and attention they receive. Staff have aspirations for the young people in their care and there is an expectation they will live full and active lives during their placements by accessing a range of social and educational opportunities in both the home and local community. Although young people reside in a group setting, staff are extremely 'child focused' and each is treated as an individual with their own specific physical, social, educational, cultural and emotional needs. Staff have established trusting relationships with young people and are successful in working alongside them to address their needs.

Staff promote the concept of respect and have established a set of behavioural boundaries that are consistently applied. Staff ensure each young person is aware of what is and is not acceptable behaviour. An established rewards system provides an effective mechanism for young people to monitor their progress and reap the rewards of their efforts. Staff reinforce positive outcomes and success is recognised and celebrated. Staff are successful in helping young people break patterns of anti-social and self-destructive behaviour.

There is clear evidence that young people are settled and are making progress in significant areas of their lives, including their education. School and college attendance levels are extremely good. Their success is making a significant contribution to their self-confidence. The older residents are entering their last year in the home and are being appropriately prepared for moving on. All have already

acquired a comprehensive range of independent living skills. Evidence indicates that young people are responding positively to the support and encouragement they are receiving from staff.

The requirements and one recommendation arising from the last inspection has been appropriately addressed. Changes have been made to working practices relating to the storage and distribution of medication and systems are more robust. Staff supervision is taking place at regular intervals and is providing opportunities for staff to engage in reflective practice. The homes new manager has settled in and has embarked on the registration process. Regulation 34 reports are now being produced at appropriate intervals. Although physical interventions are rare, a more comprehensive reporting system has been introduced that aims to provide key intervention on the antecedence of such events. Although the home was found to be structurally sound and in reasonable decorative order it is recommended that the introduction of brighter colour schemes and softer furnishings could make it more homely.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- complete the redecoration and refurbishment programme to ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people respond positively to the individual support and clear behavioural boundaries that are consistently applied by staff. Regular one-to-one sessions provide opportunities for young people to discuss personal issues and develop meaningful relationships with individual staff. Staff are successful in helping young people address issues relating to self-destructive and anti-social patterns of behaviour. Young people were observed to be at ease in the company of staff and social interaction was spontaneous and respectful.

Young people are encouraged to remain fit and active by eating wisely and taking regular exercise. Young people can access a balanced diet that includes fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people spoke in positive terms about both the quantity and quality of food on offer. The homes daily programme provides time for sport and recreational activities that ensures they maintain a good level of fitness. Cycling and games in the local parks are popular with the current residents. Young people are provided with advice and guidance on health related issues and individual's with established habits, such as smoking or taking illicit substances, are offered support to give up. The health and well-being of each young person is closely monitored and

appointments with health professionals arranged to address any identified issues. There are effective policies and procedures that ensure medication is both stored and dispensed safely.

Given that many young people arrive at the home having experienced periods of disruption in their schooling, their progress is impressive and attendance levels are exceptionally good. The good lines of communication that exist between residential and educational staff ensure young people are appropriately supported in their educational activities. All the current residents are engaged in full time education including a number who are undertaking work experience as part of their college courses.

During their placements young people are provided with support and opportunities to develop a range of independent living skills. A number of the older residents can now travel independently, manage their own budgets and prepare their own meals. The acquisition of such skills equips them appropriately for moving on to independent or semi-independent living placements.

Quality of care

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

Staff are aspirational for the young people in their care and aim to ensure that they will successfully grow and develop physically, socially and emotionally during their placements. Young people are helped to identify personal goals relating to their education, behaviour and social activities and all success is recognised and celebrated. This approach contributes significantly to each individual's self-esteem and confidence. There is an expectation that young people will peacefully co-exist and respect others. As and when disagreements arise, they are normally resolved through discussion. The social dynamics within the resident group are carefully monitored to ensure no young person is being excluded or subject to bullying behaviour. Individuals are brought to task for anti-social behaviour or the use of inappropriate behaviour and all are made aware of the connection between actions and consequences. Staff are conversant with the level of understanding of each young person and communicate appropriately.

A comprehensive care planning system provides an extremely effective mechanism for both identifying and addressing the care needs of each young person. The 'child focused approach' adopted by the staff team ensures the views of each young person are sought about all aspects of their lives within the home. An effective key-worker system provides regular opportunities for staff to discuss with young people the progress they are making and to develop strategies to overcome any identified difficulties. The cultural and religious needs of each individual are identified during the admission process and arrangements made to ensure they can be met. Individual risk assessments are appropriately used to identify any areas of potential concern associated with a young person's behaviour and guidance developed for staff to keep them safe. All care plans are subject to regular review and are updated in response to significant incidents and changing circumstances. Communication between staff is

good and there are effective systems that ensure information is appropriately shared and this makes a significant contribution to consistency in the delivery of care.

Young people confirmed they were aware of the home's complaints system and would have no difficulty in reporting any worries or concerns to any member of the staff team. Staff reported that most concerns relate to everyday niggles associated with communal living and are normally resolved through discussion. The small numbers of complaints made, in recent times, have been effectively addressed.

A number of the current residents have lived in the home for some years and have responded positively to the support and guidance provided by staff. All have made considerable progress in many areas of their lives, including their education and following academic success have now moved on to full-time college courses. Their considerable progress is recognised by staff and they are now acting as positive role models for the younger residents who can see the benefits their hard work has brought them.

Although a number of young people still present with challenging behaviour, staff can normally diffuse volatile situations by deploying a range of effective diversionary techniques. Each young person has a plan in place that outlines what levels of support they need to maintain positive behaviour. Physical restraints are extremely rare and are only ever used if it is felt a young person is putting themselves or others at risk.

Young people live full and active lives and staff ensure they reap the benefits offered by the home's proximity to a number of large open spaces that are ideal for pursuing recreational activities such as cycling. Although young people undertake some activities together, staff encourage each individual to develop their own specific hobbies and interests. Young people are helped to access clubs and activities within the local community. A number of the current residents have established friendships with other young people in the local community through their participation in community based activities. The extension of their social networks has proved to be extremely positive in developing individual's self-esteem.

The home offers a pleasant domestic environment that is subject to regular maintenance. However, some of the décor is looking a bit tired. This has been recognised by staff and a redecoration and refurbishment programme is being developed in conjunction with young people. All are being encouraged to play an active role in the designing the changes they would like to make to their rooms. Each young person is provided with their own lockable room which is designated as their own 'personal space'. Young people reported that the home's heating and hot water supply were good.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding underpins all the policies, procedures and working practices within the

home. Appropriate staffing levels, effective supervision and regular health and safety checks ensure young people reside in an environment that is safe and free from unnecessary hazards. Even though the home occupies a prominent corner site access is limited and all visitors have to report staff, produce their identity and sign in. Young people indicated that they felt safe living in the home. Staff work alongside people and help them develop strategies to minimise risk and keep them safe in a variety of setting from cycling in the local community to playing with friends in the local park. Young people are aware of the need to maintain contact with staff when out and about in the local community and are, according to staff, forthcoming about where they are going and with whom they are associating. Though staff have established procedures in the event of a young person going missing, they have not had to initiate them in recent times.

The home has a fire alarm system that is subject to regular testing and unannounced fire evacuations ensure staff and young people remain conversant with procedures. On occasions the behaviour of young people can result in damage to the fabric of the building. The company has a permanent maintenance team who respond immediately to ensure the environment remains safe.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a stable group of experienced and well qualified staff. All staff have been appropriately vetted and deemed suitable to work with vulnerable young people. All staff receive safeguarding training and are aware of their individual responsibilities in regard to the reporting of any safeguarding issues or concerns.

Leadership and management

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

The home is operating with a new manager who has been in post for five months. He is currently in the process of seeking registration and has completed the application process. He has settled into his role and has established effective relationships with both staff and young people. He is extremely 'child centred' and keen to ensure that staff continue to provide care that is tailored to the specific needs of each young person. He is keen to ensure that young people in the home develop a comprehensive range of independent living skills and the emotional resilience to successfully move on at the end of their placements. Young people and staff are responding positively to his inclusive approach and are appreciative of being involved in the homes development. There is a clear commitment on the part of staff to further improve the service they provide.

There is a culture of professional development within the staff team and expectation that individual's will update their knowledge and skills on an on-going basis. Staff can access regular training opportunities by attending courses organised by the company and by accessing e-learning opportunities. Staff are well supported and regular supervision provides opportunities for them to engage in reflective practice. Staff are clear about their individual role and responsibilities. Handovers between staff on different shifts and regular staff meetings ensure that they remain conversant with

each young person's progress.

The manager has introduced a number of new monitoring tools to document both the individual progress of each young person and the development of the home. The operation of the home is subject to monthly regulatory visits and any recommendations are appropriately addressed.

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.