

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Lovie
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately run and registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning 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 make good progress in developing emotional resilience from their starting points. They do well in their education and have positive plans for the future.

They receive an excellent quality of care and feel cherished in this home.

Young people have highly personalised placement planning and staff practice is completely tailored to the needs of each young person.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice. Young people feel safe and their families are confident that they are properly looked after. While some young people do go missing on a regular basis, this is effectively managed and the associated risks are minimised.

The Registered Manager provides strong leadership and has a clear commitment to an improvement agenda. However, there is a minor shortfall in the monitoring that takes place in line with Regulation 34, but this does not impact adversely on the young people's care. There are also minor shortfalls in the records that are kept of staff supervision and complaints.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	ensure that the registered person monitors the matters set out in Schedule 6, with particular regard to including illnesses of children, minutes of staff meetings and allegations against staff. (Regulation 34 (1) (a))	19/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the supervision tracker is signed by the member of staff at the end of the supervision (NMS 19.5)
- ensure that the provider follows the framework for managing cases of allegations as set out in Working Together to Safeguard Children (revised in March 2010), with particular regard to ensuring that there is a written record which confirms that young people have been told the outcome of the case. (NMS 20.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in coming to terms with issues from their past and are able to move forward with their lives. They develop better ways of expressing themselves and learn a range of useful social skills. This all promotes greater confidence which enhances their future life chances and helps them to acquire the attitudes and skills to become effective parents themselves.

Careful risk assessment empowers young people to take responsibility for their own health needs wherever possible. This includes choosing to make lifestyle changes for health reasons. For example, some young people make concerted efforts to reduce their smoking and to stop their use of drugs. This is motivated by their positive engagement with their plans for the future.

Young people have significant involvement in, and ownership of, the important decisions about their lives. This ensures that their independence is maximised and promoted.

Young people make good educational progress. They have all taken GCSE exams and

have realistically ambitious plans in place for their futures. They are confident that they will be successful in their chosen careers. The young people feel positive about themselves and are all on track to achieve their individual goals.

All of the young people have friends in the local area. They enjoy active social lives and are very capable in their interactions with their peers. Some young people enjoy significant involvement in the wider community, through activities like drama and choir groups. These new experiences help those young people learn effective coping skills in social situations. These skills will benefit them in all aspects of their adult lives.

Young people have good contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Through these arrangements, they sustain and nurture those attachments which are crucial to their overall wellbeing.

Quality of care

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

Young people feel that staff are consistently highly concerned for their welfare and that they will go the extra mile to help them achieve their goals. As one young person says: 'this is an excellent home. Staff here are lovely, really supportive - it's the best care home I've been in'.

The relatives of young people and other professionals involved in their care, endorse the exceptional quality of care that staff provide. One parent comments that: 'this is an absolutely fantastic home, they are a great staff team, they are just so nice.'

Staff are ambitious for the young people and demonstrate warmth and pride when talking about their achievements. Young people's photographs and certificates are prominently displayed in the home. As a result, young people feel cherished and valued and this significantly promotes their self-esteem.

Staff are extremely effective in addressing any barriers to education and in helping the young people to have high aspirations. As one education professional confirms: 'staff gave really incredible support for (name's) education and this support was done without question'. Staff assume the role of a committed parent in supporting and advocating for the young people's education. As a result, young people are confident that staff will not give up on them.

Young people's wishes, feelings and views are entirely central to staff practice. Young people consequently know that their opinions matter and are taken seriously. For example, as one young person comments in written feedback about what is good about the home: 'I have a say, my own private space, the support, the professional control, the attempt at fairness. Dealing with things without raising them again'.

To complement to formal learning, staff are highly effective in creating opportunities for young people to learn and develop their skills in all aspects of their lives. For

example, they have structured individual independence programmes, which help them to manage budgets, bank accounts, shopping and cooking. They consequently gain a wide range of life skills which build on their abilities and ensure that they are very well prepared for a successful transition to independence.

Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to embedding equality and diversity principles into the daily running of the home. For example, young people develop an appreciation of each other's culture and origin through a project board about each of their backgrounds. Young people also regularly use a well-thumbed file of cultural recipes that provide opportunities to learn about different religions and societies. This helps to broaden their horizons and promotes tolerance and respect for each other.

Staff build exceptionally effective partnerships with external agencies. This enables each of the young people to benefit from personalised and holistic support packages along with tailored expert provision as needed. For example, young people are able to access specialist help in respect of child sexual exploitation and also benefit from regular individual therapy from appropriately qualified practitioners. This helps the young people to deal constructively with issues from the past and helps them to have a positive perspective about their futures.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are proactive in recognising the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of the young people in their care. Interventions are creative, thoughtful and underpinned by clear risk assessment. This enables young people to take managed and considered risks in line with their preparation for living independently. For example, given the progress that the young people have made door alarms are no longer in use. Young people are encouraged to learn from their mistakes and, overall, they are confident and secure in the knowledge that staff will be there to help them as needed.

Some young people go missing from the home on a regular basis. However, these episodes are within relatively safe parameters as staff always know where the young people are, and have regular meaningful contact with them. These incidents are appropriately risk assessed with all the relevant agencies. Staff devise innovative and creative strategies to reduce the risks while the young people are missing. A safeguarding professional commented: 'The home provides an effective and detailed response to young people who go missing. I think it's a strong safeguarding response.'

Staff are well trained in all aspects of safeguarding, such as child sexual exploitation. As a result, staff are alert to young people's particular vulnerabilities and any potential risk of harm. They are knowledgeable and confident about how to implement safeguarding procedures and act in accordance with procedures when necessary.

The home has extremely good links with local specialist agencies in respect of risk evaluation and therapeutic support for the young people. This helps to promote their safety and wellbeing.

Young people themselves report that they have a strong sense of safety in this home. This is endorsed by feedback from relatives and professionals. Young people have staff and therapists that they can and do talk to about any worries that they may have. Consequently, young people feel relaxed and secure in the care that they receive and are able to move forward in their lives.

Positive, friendly and professional relationships between staff and young people underpin highly effective behaviour management strategies. These are based on praise, personalised incentives and realistic individual targets. As a result, physical restraint is hardly ever used, and there is only minimal and appropriate use of sanctions. The home exercises a zero tolerance to bullying so that young people are able to live without fear and intimidation.

Investigations into allegations are handled fairly, quickly and robustly in a way that provides effective protection for young people. Young people receive verbal feedback about the outcome of allegations but this is not confirmed by written record. The home is therefore unable to fully demonstrate that it has informed young people and whether they are happy with the response.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager provides strong leadership and has an inclusive, open management style which staff value and reflect in their practice with young people. She is appropriately experienced and is in process of undertaking a level five management qualification.

Staff are well supported in their role. They receive regular supervision that they consider to be of a high standard and which helps them to do their job properly. However, staff do not always sign the supervision tracker to confirm that they have had their supervision.

Staff have individual development plans within which their training needs are identified and met. All of the staff are either trained to the minimum professional level or are in process of working towards this. Additionally, the Registered Manager ensures that staff keep up to date with new legislation and practice developments through specific training events, team meetings and individual supervision. This helps to establish a well informed and committed staff team with a shared focus on improving the quality of the service.

The Registered Manager has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses

of her service. She has a sound written annual development plan which demonstrates evidence of a culture of continual improvement. For example, previous inspections have identified concerns about the maintenance and decoration of the home. It now presents as an exceptionally well maintained and welcoming environment and all previous areas for improvement have been addressed. This helps to ensure that young people feel valued in this home.

The Registered Manager undertakes regularly monitors the quality of care and the progress that young people make. This is clearly effective as the quality of care is exceptional, but the monitoring does not address all aspects required by Regulations. She is further assisted in the quality assurance process by good evaluative reports from someone who monitors the standard of care on behalf of the responsible individual. The Registered Manager encourages a transparency and openness to the external world and it's scrutiny by providing feedback questionnaires to professionals, relatives and young people. This demonstrates her willingness to listen and learn from constructive criticism in the interests of the development of her service.

Since the last inspection there have been a couple of complaints from neighbours. These have been successfully managed by the Registered Manager. Neighbours have been invited into the home to meet young people and gain a better understanding of the aims of the service. As a result, neighbour relations have significantly improved and young people have learnt lessons about social cohesion and conflict management.

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.