

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	19/11/2013
Inspector	Angela Whiteley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/12/2012
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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 and/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 in a safe, caring and supportive environment. They make good progress for their starting point across all aspects of their welfare and development, particularly in terms of education, health, behaviour and self-esteem. Well-planned introductions and transitions enable young people to settle quickly into the home. Young people comment positively on the quality of care they receive and their relationships with staff. One young person said, 'staff are there when you need them.' Another said, 'the staff are nice.'

There is very good communication between young people, staff and other professionals who have an interest in securing positive progress for young people. A placing social worker confirms that communication, planning and joint working are, 'excellent.' Staff are patient and persistent in their efforts to help young people understand and manage their behaviour differently. They provide access to support services, such as play therapists and speech and language therapists. Staff provide opportunities for young people to succeed through a broad range of activities, which develop confidence and self-esteem. They take appropriate action and implement safeguarding measures, which help to keep young people safe in and outside the home.

Good leadership, management and monitoring of the home ensures young people's individuality is promoted and respected. Young people benefit from personalised and well-planned packages of care. Detailed risk assessments are tailored to individual needs; this helps young people develop a positive self-image. Care documents are reviewed regularly to keep young people safe in a supportive environment. However, young people do not have up-to-date placing authority care plans. Staff are proactive

in chasing these missing documents and request review meetings where changes in care packages are needed. This ensures young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans and have opportunity to fully understand and contribute to their reviews. Young people are listened to and regularly express their views and wishes and see results. They are central to the running of the home and are actively involved in planning processes. An independent reviewing officer feels that staff have, 'a good understanding of young people's needs and build on their needs and wishes.'

The manager has a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. However, some areas for development are identified in respect of the children's guide and suitable qualifications of agency staff. These shortfalls have not had an adverse impact on the quality of care and outcomes for young people but drive forward further improvements.

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
5 (2001)	notify Ofsted of any review of the children's guide within 28 days (Regulation 5 (b))	10/12/2013
28 (2001)	ensure records for each child who is accommodated include the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 of this regulation. In particular, ensure there is a copy of the plan for the care of the child prepared by the placing authority. (Regulation 28 (1)(a))	10/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all existing staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification. All new staff engaged from the commencement of the NMS (in April 2011) are to hold the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma which must include social care units or be working towards the Diploma within six months of confirmation of employment. In particular, this relates to agency staff. (NMS 18.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress at the home. They are supported to develop a healthy self-image through regular therapeutic support and keyworker sessions that address behavioural issues and consider the impact of their earlier life experiences. As a result, young people develop confidence and emotional resilience. They learn to relate to others and begin to express themselves more appropriately. Long-term stable placements help young people develop and sustain attachments within the home and in the community.

Young people enjoy good health, lead healthy lifestyles and learn to understand the benefits of eating well. Their routine and specialist health care needs are effectively addressed. Young people do not smoke, use alcohol or take drugs and do not engage in risk-taking or offending behaviours. They actively participate in a range of positive activities, such as singing, drama, gym and horse riding. They enjoy the physical and mental health benefits associated with regular exercise and are supported to engage in a positive way in the local and wider community.

Young people have excellent school attendance and make some good progress from their starting point. All young people benefit from the support of staff that are committed to promoting the value of education. Young people receive support with homework and have access to a range of learning resources in the home. Achievements are celebrated within the home and have additional positive effects on young people in terms of boosting self-esteem and confidence.

Young people play a full part in decision-making in the home and feel that their contribution is taken seriously. They have frequent opportunities to explore their wishes and feelings on an individual basis and to share their views on the quality of service they receive. Young people contribute to their reviews; this enables them to influence planning decisions concerning their future.

Young people have contact with their families in accordance with their wishes and any directions from placing authorities. It is supervised where appropriate to ensure that contact is safe. This helps young people maintain and reinforce important relationships and reach an understanding about their past experiences. This contributes to a strong sense of well-being.

Young people make some progress in developing independence skills in accordance with their age and cognitive ability. They are well supported by staff in this aspect of their lives. As they grow and mature, young people are prepared for the transition to adulthood through individual planned work that fully takes account of their age and needs. This enables them to take small steps to gain confidence in their own ability and understand the implications of being independent in the wider community.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy high quality care in a home that closely replicates a nurturing family environment. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff and relate well to each other. One young person said, 'staff are there when you need them.' The staff are patient, calm and good-humoured in their exchanges with young people. However, they are equally confident about challenging young people when their behaviour warrants it or giving them the time and space to work things out for themselves. Staff are able to make excellent use of their relationships with young people to effect change. A parent noted that staff are, 'caring.'

Young people are widely consulted. This includes constructive house meetings, individual meetings, keyworker sessions and wishes and views record books. Their views and wishes are acted on wherever possible. Young people are at the centre of all decision-making in the home and their opinions are highly valued. For example, young people have established their own house rules for visitors and staff who come to the home. Staff strongly promote open and honest communication, recognising it as a key factor in ensuring that young people are engaged successfully with life in the home and wider community.

Information about making a complaint is readily available for young people and revisited with them monthly. They confirm they know how to make a complaint should the need arise. However, staff also make constructive use of their individual sessions with young people to address their worries and concerns before they develop into anything more serious. This proactive approach ensures young people's potential grievances are addressed promptly.

Staff ensure young people receive consistent care and support through effective use of comprehensive care packages. Placement plans, behaviour management plans and detailed risk assessments are reviewed regularly to clearly reflect individual strengths and changing needs. Staff provide an excellent running record of the progress that young people make with monthly progress reports. Records are shared with young people, ensuring that they are fully involved in decision-making and can contribute their views and wishes.

Strong partnership working with health, education and placing authorities means that young people receive the support and intervention to which they are entitled. Staff are fully committed to promoting education and work successfully with educational colleagues to ensure that school placements meet the needs of young people. The home is proactive in challenging any barriers that prevent young people making the most of their education. Young people are strongly supported to achieve at school and staff have high aspirations for them. A placing social worker confirms that staff advocate well for young people.

Young people live in a spacious, comfortable family home that is warm and welcoming. It is well-decorated and furnished. Young people, staff and professionals express high satisfaction with the living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and protected from harm. Staff have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures. They have a clear awareness of their collective and individual responsibilities to keep young people safe. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to young people's previous circumstances. Staff work effectively with young people and other professionals to promote young people's safety. They work intensively with young people to develop personal skills and confidence to help them stay safe in preparation for independence. Individualised planning clearly identifies any risks young people may face and outlines strategies to ensure their safety and welfare is protected.

The home is performing strongly in keeping young people safe. For example; young people do not go missing from home and they are not involved in risk-taking or offending behaviour and bullying is not an issue at this home. Positive socially acceptable behaviour is promoted effectively. As a result, there is no need for physical intervention. Sanctions are used fairly and there is a creative, individualised reward system in place. Staff identify young people's trigger points and are skilful in their use of techniques that avoid confrontation. There have been no reports of significant events or investigations into allegations of harm. The home's proactive approach contributes to young people's emotional well-being and keeps them safe.

The manager has a well-established recruitment and selection process, which ensures that young people are cared for by adults who are safe and competent. However, some agency staff do not hold the required qualification. Nevertheless, staff are competent to achieve good outcomes for young people. Visitors to the home are checked and supervised appropriately to prevent people having access to vulnerable young people.

The premises are well-maintained and provide young people with a homely, attractive environment. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks to ensure the premises are safe. In addition, staff ensure that young people know what to do in case of an emergency through regular fire drills, which ensures they know how to evacuate the building safely.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from strong leadership. It is managed effectively by a suitably qualified and experienced Registered Manager who also manages another home within the same company. She divides her time well between the two homes and maintains regular presence and good oversight of both homes. She has an inclusive approach, is valued by staff and her leadership skills are held in high regard. Her approach is a key factor in motivating staff, ensuring consistency and placing young people at the heart of decision-making.

The home is sufficiently resourced in terms of staffing and finances. There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty to ensure that young people's individual needs are met and that they are safe. Permanent and casual staff are suitably qualified or enrolled on appropriate training. They benefit from regular supervision and team meetings, enabling them to reflect on their practice and identify developmental needs. Training is strongly promoted, and in addition to mandatory training, staff are encouraged to access a wide range of courses. The home's approach ensures that staff are fully aware of current good practice.

The Statement of Purpose is a well written, comprehensive document that clearly sets out the home's underpinning principles and arrangements for the day-to-day operation of the home. Similarly, a new children's guide provides a succinct age-appropriate account of the service that young people can expect. However, Ofsted were not notified of the revision of this document.

Children's records generally present a good overall picture of their experiences at the home. However, some records, such as the placing authority care plan are missing. This is primarily the responsibility of the placing authority and is being chased by the Registered Manager. While the absence of this information can hinder staff in supporting young people and may not give young people a full understanding of their care journey. This provider prepares a comprehensive care package document for all young people in their care, which is agreed with the placing social worker and gives a very clear picture of young people's care needs. The records are stored securely, ensuring that confidential information is safe.

Monitoring processes are in place that ensure young people enjoy a high standard of care. These include independent monthly visits to the home on behalf of the provider and monthly management reports on activity within the home. They provide clear evaluation on all aspects of life within the home and identify areas for improvement and development. The manager has ensured shortfalls identified at the last inspection have been addressed. The home has a comprehensive development plan that is reviewed regularly and sets realistic targets to drive forward further improvements. This ensures that the home continues to operate in the best interests 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.