

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Emeline Evans
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned by an established company. The home is registered to accommodate a maximum of three young people who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. A therapeutic approach is taken in working with children and young people with the aim of enabling them to return to their family home or to an alternative family placement.

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 high levels of support from a child-centred staff team. Staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of the young people and have successfully created a nurturing and welcoming environment. The management team are constantly looking for innovative ways to further improve the quality of care provided. This is evident in the robust monitoring which takes place within the home which reflects the commitment of the staff team to improve outcomes for young people in the home.

Young people talk positively about the care they receive and have formed very close and trusting relationships with the staff. Even though there have been challenging situations presented in recent months, staff have been persistent in working positively with the young people to reflect on behaviour. This practice has resulted in young people feeling stable, safe and happier. One professional commented, 'Staff are clearly fond of the young person and are a source of support and trust for him.' Staff have high aspirations for all the young people and use imaginative ways to gain their views and enable them to further progress in their independence skills through making choices.

Young people say they feel safe and parents and social workers reiterate this. Young people live in a secure environment. However, an area for improvement is to seek advice from the local fire and rescue service with regard to the escape routes in the building. Other matters for improvement include the speed of the notification process

for significant events to relevant authorities.

Other shortfalls identified primarily relate to records that are not fully maintained which could have the potential to impact on the outcomes for young people.

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
17B (2001)	ensure the volume kept to record any measures of control, restraint or discipline includes all details listed in these regulations (Regulation 17B (3i) and (4b))	01/10/2012
30 (2001)	ensure the registered person reports notifiable events to the appropriate authority without delay (Regulation 30 (1))	01/10/2012
32 (2001)	consult with the fire and rescue authority to ensure that the home provides adequate means of escape. (Regulation 32(1)(b))	01/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the emergency escape plan in place is more accessible and specific to the setting (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that the care to be provided for each child is clearly identified and understood by the placing authority. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.19)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make positive progress in many areas of their lives; their emotional well-being, confidence and self-esteem are developing well. This therapeutic community supports young people to begin to make sense of their childhood experiences. This process of support is allowing young people to move on to develop a positive self-view in preparation for their transition to adulthood. Young people are encouraged to engage in a range of therapeutic programmes and benefit from the emotional support of staff during these times. The joined partnership of the care

staff, therapists and professionals from the individual educational settings allow a holistic approach to be achieved; this ensures young people receive consistent messages from all the adults.

Young people are encouraged and supported in adopting healthy lifestyles, through a range of physical activities and a nutritious diet. Young people are actively involved in contributing to the menu and staff discuss with the young people the importance of healthy eating. Young people are provided with a range of information and given numerous opportunities to spend time with staff to discuss and make decisions on their health and well-being. Young people report that, 'Staff are available to talk to all of the time.' Young people are regularly involved in food preparation and cooking; this assists in developing independent living skills.

Young people's potential and aspirations for future learning are fully supported by staff. Staff fully recognise the value of education and provide effective support to the young people's individual educational arrangements. Young people are very positive about their learning opportunities and the achievements they have made. Young people's accomplishments are celebrated. Educational achievements are proudly displayed around the home; this contributes further to developing young people's self-esteem. Young people feel well supported with their education and are motivated to succeed.

Staff support young people with contact arrangements and young people benefit from being able to maintain appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Individual contact arrangements are suitably supported and facilitated by staff. Young people confirm that they understand the contact plans and arrangements that are in place. Placing authorities report on the flexibility of the home in providing these arrangements.

Young people enjoy various leisure activities and are keen to be involved in the local community. Young people are members of youth clubs and community based activities; these include marine cadets, guides and football clubs. Young people have also developed links with the local dog rescue centre and participate in dog walking; young people are very positive about this opportunity. This involvement encourages young people to participate in an activity and provides opportunity to socialise with others outside of the residential group.

Within the home the young people are encouraged to develop and acquire independent living skills which will help them in adulthood. With support from staff, young people complete a strengths and difficulties assessment and identify areas on which to focus. Staff acknowledge young people's achievements which contribute to enhancing their self-esteem and confidence.

Quality of care

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

A strength of the service is the supportive and nurturing environment where young

people can begin to feel safe and become more confident. Young people and staff have worked through some very challenging issues in recent months. However, staff's persistence has had a positive impact on how young people relate to significant events in their lives. In particular, this includes the implications of living and adapting to changes in group situations and dynamics and a reflection on their past experiences. Young people's emotional health and well-being is central to how staff plan and support young people through challenging situations. Young people receive an outstanding quality of care from the staff working collaboratively in their varied roles. This enables young people to make progress in many aspects of their lives. Young people are positive about their relationships with staff and each other. Young people comment, 'It is okay here, I can talk to people' and 'staff are awesome'. One parent commented, 'My son has formed a great relationship with the adults.'

Young people know how to voice their opinions and understand how to make a complaint. There are numerous opportunities for young people to express their views in the running of the home, within 'kids chat', direct work and in every day conversations with staff. For example, requests for satellite television, choices in the decoration of the home and menus have been listened to and acted upon. Young people comment, 'Staff listen to us when we have asked for things.' Clear feedback is given following all requests.

Care planning documents are very comprehensive and contain a wide range of information. Equality and diversity is central in the development of these plans. Young people are actively involved in contributing to their placement plans with clear targets identified. There are stringent processes in place to evaluate the effectiveness of care planning and the impact of targets is identified. This process is ensuring young people's needs are fully identified and enables young people to make their views known about their care and as a result, young people feel involved and consulted.

The range of therapeutic interventions is extensive, to ensure the most appropriate method is selected for individual young people. The home is committed to working flexibly and imaginatively with both the young people and professionals. Staff are equipped with the necessary skills and support from professionals to enable them to understand the young people and respond positively. Staff have very good links with outside agencies and consultants to ensure the health of the young people is promoted. Communication with outside professionals is excellent and this ensures a holistic approach is achieved.

Staff actively support young people to make progress in every aspect of their lives. As a result, young people are increasing their social skills and broadening their horizons. Young people are positive about the care they receive.

The home is situated in a residential area within easy reach of local facilities. Young people live in an environment, which is decorated and furnished to a high standard providing a homely atmosphere. Young people help with the re-decoration of the home; this gives the young people a sense of achievement.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The relationships young people are developing with the staff mean they feel able to talk to staff should they feel worried or upset. Opportunities are regularly given for young people to discuss ways to keep themselves safe. Staff receive regular training on safeguarding and demonstrate a good understanding and knowledge of safeguarding matters. This ensures young people live in a home, which supports them to keep themselves safe. There is a culture of openness in the home that allows for discussion around bullying and staff work with young people to address and resolve any instances.

There are effective procedures for responding to incidents when young people are missing from care. Staff's careful observations of young people's behaviours and knowledge of triggers help them to intervene at an early stage to prevent incidents escalating.

Young people know the consequences of risk-taking behaviours and how this impacts on their safety and their presence in the community. Staff are persistent in supporting young people to keep safe and work collaboratively with external professionals including the youth offending team to encourage young people to reflect on the impact their behaviour has on others.

Young people understand the rules of the home and the consequences of not abiding by them. Staff are good at promoting positive behaviour and relationships. Staff receive appropriate behaviour management training and have a good understanding of de-escalation techniques. Incidents of physical intervention are low and there is a thorough evaluation of consequences and restraints by the manager; this allows staff to monitor the effectiveness of young people's behaviour management plans. There is now a bound log in place to record all measures of physical intervention; however, there is no detail recorded in the volume of the measures used to prevent physical intervention or the signature of the person making the record. This makes it difficult to fully monitor the effectiveness of the intervention.

Risk assessments identify levels of risk and the action required to minimise and eliminate such risks. The service engages young people to consider their own risk assessments; this raises their awareness of personal safety and involves them in decision making.

There is a robust recruitment process in place and this includes careful selection and vetting of staff working with the young people in the home. Routine safety checks, including fire safety are carried out and clearly evidenced. Young people are regularly involved in evacuation and fire drills; this ensures young people are clear on actions to take in the event of a fire or emergency. The home currently has fire exits, which are locked at night, and staff hold keys to exit the building. The keys are not easily accessible at all times. Therefore there is not adequate means of escape for young

people or visitors in the event of fire should a member of staff not be available. The home is therefore required to seek advice from the local fire and rescue service to ensure they comply with regulations. There is a company emergency evacuation plan in place, however, this is not specific to the children's home or easily accessible to staff and visitors.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living in a home that is well managed. The manager and staff team work very closely with education settings, therapists and external professionals. Together they ensure the service provides an integrated approach to meet the needs of individual young people. The Registered Manager understands the strengths of the service and areas for development. There is a very comprehensive development plan in place, which fully incorporates the views of the young people. There is a clear commitment to further improve outcomes for young people.

Staff are familiar with the home's Statement of Purpose and its objectives. There is an aim on working in partnership with parents and professionals. The home has received feedback from a placing authority with regard to confusion on the commencement of therapeutic work with young people. The manager has since given clarification on this matter. However, these individual plans are not routinely identified and presented to placing authorities prior to a young person's placement within the home. The children's guide has been produced to a high standard and is both informative and child-friendly.

Staff numbers, experience and support are such that they sufficiently meet the needs of the young people. Staff are very positive about the range of unique training opportunities offered by the organisation. Since the last inspection, staff have participated in a range of training specific to the needs of the young people currently accessing the service. This includes training on group dynamics, attachment and life story work. Regular supervision and staff meetings also support staff to provide a high-quality service to the young people. Young people are supported by a staff team that is consistent and stable. A current staff vacancy is in the process of being suitably filled, and to provide continuity of care to the young people this vacancy is temporarily being filled by bank staff who are very familiar with the home.

Monitoring of the home has developed into a robust process where actions identified from these systems are promptly addressed. These processes are thoroughly evaluated and ensure the manager has a grasp on the strength of the service and any areas to improve on. They provide a clear analysis of young people's holistic needs, progress and achievements.

Written notifications are submitted to Ofsted as required. The notifications for the most recent events had just been sent at the time of this inspection. Appropriate action was taken by the home in all instances. However, there was delay in notifying Ofsted and relevant authorities with regard to these significant events. A delay in

notifying the necessary authorities does not allow immediate decisions to be made on behalf of the young person.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. This helps staff in supporting young people to understand their background.

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.