

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 **outstanding**.

Young people receive outstanding levels of support from a highly committed and child-centred staff team. Staff work consistently with therapy teams and outside agencies to ensure young people's safety is paramount. This holistic approach has enabled the home to be successful in creating a nurturing and welcoming environment. Young people are supported to reach their desired goals and receive highly personalised care which promotes progress. Young people progress in terms of their independence and education attendance and achievement. The support provided by a motivated staff team contributes effectively to increase young people's confidence and self-esteem.

Individual placement and therapeutic plans clearly set out how the young people's emotional, social, health and therapeutic needs are to be met. The young people's views are sought and taken into consideration on how the home is run and many opportunities are provided to integrate with community events and activities. Young people enjoy a wide range of activities available to them and are supported in pursuing personal interests. They may not always agree with the house rules but recognise they are in place to protect them and keep them safe. Young people report that they feel safe.

Staff are trained and supported in their roles and their enthusiasm is evident. The leadership and management of the home implement rigorous monitoring systems and are continually striving to develop the service to further improve outcomes for

young people. Recommendations identified at this inspection are to develop administrative processes and do not have an impact on young people's quality of care.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people's care and planning prepares them effectively for adulthood (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that sufficient information (written or electronic) is retained at the home, demonstrating that the recruitment and selection of staff consistently follows good practice. This specifically relates to retaining photographs of agency staff within the home. (NMS 16.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from individualised support, which helps them grow in confidence. Individual time with staff provides opportunities for discussion and learning. One social worker reports that, 'Staff have achieved above and beyond expectations with regard to this young person.' Young people's emotional well-being and feeling of self-esteem are developing well. A professional commented, 'he has moved on and now able to except boundaries better, staff support him to get where he can emotionally due to the positive relationships he has formed.'

Staff work very closely with professionals to work with the young people to address risk taking behaviours such as police involvement and being missing from care. Staff are aware that when certain life events occur these behaviours increase and support the young people during these times. Through a proactive approach and by closely monitoring trends this has resulted in these behaviours being reduced over time.

Young people receive excellent assistance in achieving good standards in health care. Staff provide them with a healthy diet and active lifestyle to promote good health. The young people are generally very healthy and there is limited use of prescribed medication. The home works closely with health professionals, including looked after child nurses and mental health services where necessary; this assists young people to access additional services should the need arise. The home also use direct work sessions to address any health issues or to complete any preventative work. This includes discussions around reducing drugs use and healthy eating.

Staff recognise the value of education and provide effective support to the young people's individual educational arrangement. Young people's potential, aspirations

and preference for future learning are fully recognised. Staff support young people to make decisions in this area and this is further enhancing their self-esteem. Young people's attendance at school and college has increased through consistent messages. Staff work closely with professionals within education to ensure consistent messages are achieved.

Young people are supported with contact visits and telephone calls to their family members. They benefit from the emotional support of staff at these times. This practice enables young people to maintain relationships with significant people in their life.

A range of purposeful and enjoyable activities are available for the young people to try. The young people enjoy the organised trips but are equally happy to socialise in their own peer groups within the local communities. Staff work hard in nurturing and supporting interests and hobbies. This helps young people to find new activities they might enjoy, which are not associated with their past experiences and lifestyles. Staff are proactive to ensure pathway plans are in place and young people are learning skills which will be useful when preparing for independence. For example budgeting and food planning, followed by shopping and cooking skills. Young people are also encouraged to try new things. Staff report there has been progress made in this area for the young people. Young people presently residing in the home are risk assessed as not being able to lock their bedroom doors. However, independence plans presently in operation do not detail how young people can work towards being responsible for being able to lock these rooms.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care received by young people at the home is outstanding. Staff have consistently high aspirations for all the young people and strive to continually promote their welfare. Staff demonstrate exceptional understanding of the needs of all the young people, which is echoed by social workers. The welfare of young people is central to how the home operates, and staff work very closely with external agencies to promote positive outcomes for them. Importantly young people recognise and value how committed the manager and staff are. One young person commented that staff are great and 'I am loving every minute.'

Young people relate well to staff engaging openly in discussion about any issues. They are able to discuss and negotiate with staff achieving positive outcomes in a wide range of major and minor areas such as activities or external contacts therefore, aiding their personal skills development. Young people know how to voice their opinion and understand how to make a complaint. Young people actively affect the running of the home, within reason. Clear written feedback is given following all requests. Examples of this include choosing activities and the décor and design of their bedrooms and the living area. Some requests may be linked to an incentive scheme, for example a personal fish tank. Young people are given a range of opportunities to express their feelings; this is achieved through direct work sessions,

management meetings and also on one-to-one time. Staff aid young people in maintaining positive behaviours by regular verbal reminders seeking reflection and learning from young people. Staff communication is excellent ensuring that there is a consistent approach with young people.

Young people are cared for in line with their care plans and the personal needs outlined at the point of referral. Care plans are excellent and provide an abundance of information. Staff have detailed knowledge of all these needs including cultural, religious and all personal needs and ensure that they meet these, in consultation with the young person, their family and social worker. Staff celebrate young people's achievements and place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice. When young people do present challenges, for example because of the intensity of their emotional and behavioural difficulties, the quality of staffing is sufficient to meet them. Young people are encouraged to reflect on challenging periods in the home and living as part of a group. This practice supports their understanding of others' needs and difficulties.

Communication with professionals is described as excellent. The home has built exceptionally effective partnerships with external agencies and this ensures a holistic approach is achieved. The management team challenge any shortfalls in delivery of care with the appropriate professionals to ensure the young people receive the support they require. Staff are extremely dedicated in promoting young people's full participation at school or college and in the community. As a result, young people successfully attend school and participate in positive community-based activities. Young people attend cadets and the gym; these opportunities help young people to explore skills and experience success.

The home is situated in a rural location within easy reach of local amenities. It provides a safe, comfortable environment in which young people enjoy living. The accommodation is well maintained and furnished to a high standard. The young people have their own bedrooms, which reflect their own personalities. Professionals describe the home as, 'comfortable and homely.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe by diligent attention to safeguarding practice. Young people's needs are carefully risk assessed to ensure care is tailored to their needs and their welfare is protected. Staff are well-guided by thorough procedures and take their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Young people say they feel safe and that staff do what they can to keep them safe, including identifying bullying. Young people's welfare is actively promoted and the staff receive excellent training, including specialist areas, such as exploitation and sexually harmful behaviours, in order to effectively protect young people from abuse or harm.

The manager applies rigorous selection procedures to ensure only appropriate staff

work in the home. Young people take part in staff recruitment and this enables young people to express their views and feel involved in the process. The home is presently using three regular agency staff to cover a waking night vacancy. The home has gained all the necessary recruitment information from the agency they use. However, they do not currently hold a photograph of the member of agency staff on the profiles.

Young people, on occasion, do go missing from care and there are robust measures in place when this happens. This includes close links with specialist police officers and missing person co-ordinators. Triggers are identified and explored with young people; including identifying what changes can be made to reduce the need to be missing in the future. Managers regularly attend missing from care panels to enable information to be shared and a holistic approach achieved. The management team work in a proactive manner to ensure young people's safety is a priority. Higher managers of the service have met with the police at a senior level to discuss suspected incidents of child sexual exploitation in the area and strategies to minimise this risk for young people. This information has been shared with all staff and staff are confident in following risk assessments put in place as a result of this joint approach. Incidences of being missing from care and other at risk behaviours such as offending have been reducing over time.

Comprehensive individual behaviour plans ensure that there is a consistent management of behaviour within the home. There is extremely detailed analysis of any instances of restraint and this has resulted in alternative methods being used and a significant reduction in physical intervention in recent months. Young people understand the rules of the home and the negative consequences and rewards systems that are in place. Staff are consistent and clear in their expectation of behaviour in the home and communicate clear expectations regarding boundaries. This helps young people to begin to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Young people are further protected by various, personalised risk assessments. The staff team have worked to ensure that young people's risk assessments clearly identify individual vulnerabilities.

The home provides a safe and appropriately secure environment for young people. Staff ensure that the environment is well maintained, with due regard to young people's choice and their health and safety. Staff ensure that all fire fighting equipment and safety measures are regularly checked and maintained, to enhance young people's safety.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home which benefits from the excellent management, role modelling and direction given to staff by an experienced Registered Manager. The manager ensures the home operates smoothly on a day-to-day basis. A full time deputy is now in post and this has resulted in a strong committed approach to provide a high quality service. The manager updates the Statement of Purpose

providing social workers and parents with excellent information clearly outlining the ethos, aims and objectives of the home. Staff consistently meet these and ensure that young people benefit from a quick response to any recommendations or requirements made as a result of inspections. The young people's guide is in an age appropriate format and contains a range of information on external advice and advocacy services.

The management team have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and monitors the home through effective and evaluative monitoring. The excellent quality of the manager's internal checks demonstrate the impact that living in the home has for young people, and clearly identifies trends and patterns. Reports in relation to visits made to the home to monitor its conduct are robust and identify areas for improvement. Within these processes, the management team seeks the views of young people their families and other stakeholders. As a result, young people benefit from an ever-evolving service.

The home has received four complaints since the last inspection. One is still under investigation and the others were addressed robustly and resolved fully. This demonstrates a capacity to learn from feedback and to make changes in order to improve outcomes for young people.

Young people are provided with consistent and excellent standards of care from a stable and competent staff team. Sufficient staff ensure that both group and individual needs are met. Staff members are fully supported within their work through regular supervision, support and clear policies and procedures. Staff undertake a range of regulatory and service specific training which provides them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people. The organisation demonstrates a real commitment to qualifications and training. Staff receive regular opportunities to discuss their practice and relationships with young people. Effective systems are in place for staff handover and this extends to excellent communication between staff and therapy teams. Staff receive an annual appraisal of their performance and young people are fully involved in this process. This enables young people to give their views and be appropriately involved in appraising staff.

Young people can access their files which are excellent, well laid out and provide a clear picture of how they arrived at the home and their life since. Staff store files securely and encourage young people to comment on them.

The organisation and the management team are committed to continuous improvement in the delivery of service. There are a range of development plans in operation these are purposeful and realistic and fully take into account the views of the young people. The recommendation made at a previous inspection to ensure that information about individual children is kept confidential has been met. The office where information is stored now has frosted glass window in place to protect confidentiality.

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.