

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is privately owned and registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three young people of either gender.

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 being well cared for by a consistent and competent team of staff who have a very good understanding of their needs. The positive relationships that staff build with young people help them to develop their sense of self and confidence and they make good progress in all key areas of their lives.

Care plans and risk assessments are tailored to reflect the specific needs of individual young people. They promote consistency of care and enable staff to help young people to achieve positive outcomes. Young people's general and specific health needs are met. They are supported to gain skills for future independence and they take part in activities that support their general development and broaden their experiences.

Staff work hard to encourage all young people to engage and achieve in education and young people make steady progress in education from their starting point on admission.

Young people are cared for safely and they report that they feel safe in the home. They respond positively to the way staff work with them and generally behave well towards one another and staff.

The home is managed effectively to ensure that young people achieve positive outcomes. There are robust arrangements in place to monitor the quality of care in the home so that good standards are maintained for young people. The provider and the Registered Manager demonstrate a clear commitment to improving and developing the service for the benefit of young people.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to the home's Statement of Purpose and the young person's guide to the service.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a copy of the up-to-date Statement of Purpose is submitted to Ofsted (Volume 5 Statutory Guidance, paragraph 2.15)
- ensure that the children's guide to the service contains details of how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer and the Children's Rights Director. (NMS 13.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are well cared for and make good progress. Staff build positive relationships with young people and as a result of the care they are given, young people feel settled and grow in confidence. One young person said, 'It's dead good here. Staff are lovely and don't judge me at all.'

Young people enjoy good health. Their health needs are effectively assessed and services are put in place to make sure they are met. Staff promote healthy lifestyles and encourage young people to take an active interest in health issues. For example, they talk to young people about things that affect their health, such as smoking and the use of alcohol and drugs and they encourage young people to exercise and eat healthily. The home's arrangements for managing medication are robust and effective in ensuring that young people have medicines when they need them to promote their health.

Young people make progress in education from their starting point on admission to the home. When young people have an identified education placement they attend regularly. This ensures that they have the opportunity to learn and achieve. If young people struggle to engage with school when they are admitted to the home, they are supported to do school work within the home while an appropriate provision is identified.

The daily routine of the home enables young people to acquire the skills they need for adult life. For example, young people keep their own rooms clean and tidy, do their own laundry and learn to manage their own money. They also make plans for their future education and training, which encourages them to have aspirations for their future employment. Young people are well supported to prepare for

independence and also supported as they leave the home. Some young people keep in touch with staff after they have left. This demonstrates that the positive relationships they have built up with staff continue after they leave and that they feel confident about returning to see them in the home. Relatives and professionals make positive comments about how the staff support young people into independence. One professional said, 'Staff greatly helped in preparing (name) for life ahead.'

Young people benefit from being able to keep in touch with family and friends. Relatives and friends visit young people in the home and young people enjoy cooking meals for their family and friends. Some young people have also taken their friends out with them when they go on activities with staff. This helps young people to maintain positive relationships with those people who are important to them.

Quality of care

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

Young people say that they get on well with staff and report that they feel they are well cared for. One young person said, 'It's more like a real home here than a residential home.' Professionals and relatives also report that young people are well looked after and that staff are good at seeking their views about the home and informing them about how young people are doing. This promotes consistency for young people and supports their progress.

Individual care plans are tailored to the young person's specific needs. Young people have regular meetings with key workers. These enable them to write their care plans with staff and to talk about their day-to-day care and the plans for their longer term future. They have informal discussions with staff and regular house meetings where they talk about life in the home. Young people report that they know how to make a complaint and feel confident about doing so. These arrangements for consultation enable young people to make their views known and ensure that they are fully involved in the decisions made about their care. Young people are encouraged to be a part of the staff recruitment process by helping to devise questions for prospective staff which address issues they are interested in. They also have the opportunity to complete surveys about the care staff who work with them. These surveys contribute to staff appraisals. As a result of these ways of working, young people are confident that they are listened to. One young person said 'my voice is heard'.

Generally young people behave well towards one another and staff. Staff give young people clear and consistent boundaries and promote positive behaviour through individual work and the use of incentives. This helps young people learn how to manage difficulties and conflict in their lives in ways that are socially acceptable and their behaviour improves over time. Young people say that they think that staff are fair and treat them with respect. This contributes to their sense of self-worth.

Young people are able to make steady progress in education because they are fully supported by staff. Care staff have a very positive view of the value of education and they work hard to ensure that young people are able to make the most of their

opportunities. They liaise closely with teachers and other professionals, attend education meetings and support young people with school work in the home. Professionals outside the home make positive comments about the impact this has had on young people's ability to make progress in education. Young people are encouraged to take part in activities outside the home that they enjoy and that promote their general development. Recent examples have included fishing trips, gym sessions and go-karting. Young people have access to a computer and electronic games in the home which they enjoy using. They really like cooking meals for young people, staff and visitors. One young person said, 'Cooking and baking are my favourite activities!'

Young people benefit from living in a home that is comfortable, safe and well maintained throughout. The location of the home means that young people have good access to public transport and local amenities. Young people say that they like their home. They personalise their own rooms as they wish and they are encouraged to take a pride in helping to keep the home in good order for the benefit of all.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are cared for safely and they say that they feel safe. Professionals confirm that staff keep young people safe in the home and work hard to ensure their safety in the community.

Staff are trained in safeguarding, including in the exploitation of children and young people. This develops their knowledge and skills in safe care. They have a sound understanding of the home's safeguarding procedure and therefore know how to report and manage safeguarding concerns in a way that keeps young people safe. Each young person has a range of detailed care and support plans and robust risk assessments. These identify areas of concern and vulnerability for young people and show how staff work to support and protect them. All plans and risk assessments are monitored and kept up to date so they continue to be relevant to young people's needs.

Young people are protected when they use the home's computer to access the internet. Staff ensure this by having appropriate security systems in place and supervising young people when they use the computer.

There are sound systems in place to manage unauthorised absences, although the way staff work with young people lessens the likelihood of them going missing from the home. Care staff understand and follow the locally agreed protocol if a young person goes missing. Staff have strong links with other agencies, such as the police and the youth offending service. They also maintain regular communication with social workers. These positive relationships promote close partnerships and effective working, contributing to keeping young people safe when they are away from the home.

Young people know that bullying is not tolerated and they report that this not an issue in the home. They say that they generally get on well with one another, but that if there are problems staff help to 'sort them out'.

Staff promote positive behaviour in the home. They are trained to respond positively to behaviour that is challenging or difficult. This includes training in the use of physical restraint. Staff rarely use physical intervention as generally young people respond well to the way staff work with them. This contributes to young people's feelings of safety and well-being in the home.

Young people benefit from living in a safe environment. The manager ensures that regular health and safety checks are undertaken and that equipment is routinely serviced to ensure that it is safe. There are regular evacuation drills which enable young people to practise leaving the home safely in an emergency.

Staff recruitment practices are robust. Before they start work, all new staff are thoroughly vetted to assess their suitability to work with vulnerable young people. Visitors to the home are checked before they are allowed in and their whereabouts in the home is monitored. These arrangements serve to protect young people from individuals who may pose a risk to them.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager is qualified and experienced and is registered with Ofsted. She provides good leadership to the team of staff, which ensures that the home runs smoothly and young people achieve positive outcomes.

Young people benefit from being cared for by a consistent team of competent staff whose work is monitored and supported. Care staff are trained and are either qualified or working to gain a relevant qualification. Consequently, they are able to develop and maintain the knowledge and skills they need for their work. Staffing arrangements are managed effectively so that there are sufficient staff on duty at all times to ensure that young people are appropriately supervised and well cared for. Young people say that they know all the staff that look after them and that there is always someone available to support them.

Staff report that they are well supported by their manager. They have regular supervision where they discuss their own training and development needs and their care of young people. They also attend monthly team meetings and there are detailed handovers of information at the start of each shift. These arrangements support good communication within the team and promote consistency of care for young people.

The management monitoring arrangements are robust and ensure that good standards of care are maintained. The manager makes regular checks of records, supervises staff and talks to young people, their families and professionals about

how young people are cared for. The manager also sends out written surveys to families and professionals to encourage them to make their views about the home known. A senior manager within the organisation also undertakes regular checks on the work of the home. The home's manager takes action on any shortfalls that are identified during these checks to improve the quality of the service that is given to young people. There is a written development plan that shows the work that the home intends to do over the next year to continue to improve the service. The requirement that was made at the last inspection is met. The home's manager has registered with Ofsted since the last inspection.

The Statement of Purpose is detailed and provides good information about how the home works and how young people are cared for. It has recently been reviewed to ensure that it is up to date. The service meets the aims and objectives that are set out in this document. The home has not yet submitted a copy of the Statement of Purpose to Ofsted.

The young person's guide is a clear and colourful booklet that provides good information to young people, so that they can understand how they will be cared for and their rights in care. The guide does not contain details of the Children's Rights Director or each young person's independent reviewing officer, to enable young people to understand how they can contact these individuals if they wish to.

The service keeps detailed information about young people which contributes to their understanding of their history and their current plans. All records are kept up to date and are well maintained. Information about young people is held securely to protect their right to confidentiality. Young people report that they can read their records and add their comments to what is written about them. This ensures that their views are reflected in their records.

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.