

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jo Stephenson
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for two young people of either gender, who present emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

The service provides a nurturing environment that takes account of the individual needs of young people. The home delivers exceptional and personalised care programmes that encourage young people to prosper in all areas of their development. The staff team are enthusiastic and have high aspirations for young people. Promoting positive outcomes is central to the work and ethos of the home. Young people are actively encouraged to convey their views on the running of the home and all aspects of their care and welfare.

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff and benefit from the family atmosphere in the home. They are encouraged to identify their ambitions, aspirations and objectives and are inspired to achieve these. Staff access a varied range of specialist agencies to enhance their work and support young people to reflect on their behaviour. As a result, young people experience improved self-esteem and self-confidence. Staff consistently encourage young people to pursue personal interests and activities within the local community and these are included in individualised placement plans.

Staff are well trained and effectively supported in their role by a passionate management team. Monitoring systems are in place to continually review outcomes for young people and the quality of care provided by the service. However, further development of these systems is required to identify any patterns or trends. Managers seek regular feedback from young people, placing authorities and other professionals to shape the development of the home and recognise strengths and areas for improvement.

Young people speak of the home with enthusiasm and say that they feel safe and

are protected from harm. They say they are fully involved in plans for their care and recognise that house rules are in place to safeguard them.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure where physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are used, such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 10.4)
- develop monitoring systems to identify patterns and trends. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make considerable progress in all areas of their lives. Staff actively celebrate and promote the achievements of young people and therefore they develop a positive self-view and emotional resilience. One young person said: 'I used to be vile but look at me now, I'm lovely'. Staff have high expectations of young people and encourage development through personalised incentives and constant verbal motivation. Subsequently, young people respond well to staff instructions and are able to form relationships based on mutual respect. Staff assist young people to understand their family background through cohesive partnership working and personalised care planning. This means that young people are able to make sense of their past and identify their future plans.

Staff support young people to attend full time education and are proactive at securing future learning opportunities. Young people speak positively regarding their education and recognise the efforts of staff to improve their attendance. Staff have established close links with learning provisions and this means that young people benefit from tailored education plans that reflect their needs and abilities. Young people take pride in their academic achievements and have made outstanding educational progress, taking into account their starting point.

Young people are looked after in a caring, warm and nurturing environment. Staff ensure firm and consistent boundaries are in place to provide appropriate structure. The home has an exceptional approach to promoting the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people. Staff are skilled in ascertaining specific health needs. They source and finance specialist services to address these needs and ensure that young people do not experience a delay in accessing identified interventions. Consequently, young people are supported to make positive choices regarding their health and life style.

Staff encourage young people to participate in social activities within the local community and events held by the organisation. The home has established links with local leisure clubs and youth forums and this means young people are provided with the opportunity to socialise with others in the community, outside of the residential group. As a result, young people are able to expand their social circle and enhance their self-confidence. Staff are imaginative at developing means by which young people can express their views on the care they receive and the running of the home. For example, young people are invited to staff meetings to suggest any environmental improvements, changes to decoration or to negotiate amendments to care programmes. Subsequently, young people feel they are listened to.

Staff work with families in line with placement plans and are sensitive to any restrictions imposed by placing authorities. Young people say they are supported by staff to attend contact visits and that during these, they feel their privacy is respected. As a result, young people are supported to establish and maintain relationships with their families and other significant to them.

Young people have detailed and individualised independence programmes that reflect their ability and aspirations. They are supported to gain experience of cooking, budgeting and completing household chores. Staff measure progress, set targets and review achievements in line with pathway plans. In addition, staff encourage young people to participate in accredited 'skills for life' training courses by attending evening classes. Consequently, young people learn essential practical and emotional skills that support their transition. Young people say they are encouraged to play a central role in decisions about their future including career choices and accommodation options.

Quality of care

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

Young people revel in exceptionally strong relationships with staff. The home provides a well ordered, calm and relaxed atmosphere in which young people flourish. Staff exhibit a detailed and sound knowledge of the individual needs of young people and are able to ascertain antecedents to changes in mood. Subsequently, young people are the focus of tasks in the home and staff are able to adapt their practice to ensure consistent support. Young people say that staff have helped them realise their potential and address any behaviour issues. One young person said that working with the staff has 'made me proud of myself'.

The home excels in effective consultation with young people on all aspects of their care. Keywork sessions are detailed and address a range of topics relevant to individual young people and their progress. In addition, direct work sessions have been introduced to enhance this practice and challenge any negative behaviour. The home operates a compliments system between staff and young people and this means that young people are encouraged to comment on positive behaviours and identify these in others. As a result, young people are able to reflect on socially acceptable behaviour and the impact this has on their development.

Young people say they feel listened to and that they are able to influence the running of the home and understand why it is not always possible to act on their wishes. All incidents of negative behaviour are followed by detailed de-brief sessions with young people. Staff encourage young people to succinctly reflect on their behaviour and suggest consequences to their exploits. Subsequently, young people are able to contemplate the impact of their actions on themselves and others.

Young people participate in regular young people's meetings and are invited to give feedback at staff meetings. Managers embrace constructive suggestions from young people for the development of the home. Young people demonstrate confidence and assertion in expressing their views and say they know how to make a complaint. Young people receive verbal and written feedback on any issues they raise. Complaints from young people are rare, but are taken seriously and investigated fully in appropriate time scales. This means that young people feel assured that their concerns will be addressed and resolved.

Young people gain from detailed placement and pathway plans that clearly identify their individual needs. Plans specify comprehensive strategies to access bespoke support when necessary and review the impact these strategies have on outcomes for young people. As a result, young people benefit from an integrated approach to their care. Young people participate in the review of their plans and associated risk assessments. They are encouraged to negotiate proposed changes and consider possible positive and negative effects. This means that young people feel involved in decisions about their care and are able to evaluate the impact alterations to care plans may have on their development. Consequently, young people and placing authorities have a strong understanding of the aims and objectives of the placement.

Education is pivotal to the structure of the home and high attendance is ingrained in the objectives of the placement. All young people were disengaged from education prior to admission and have demonstrated excellent progress. Young people recognise the support they receive from staff in achieving their ambitions and have been encouraged to continue their education during their transition into adulthood.

The home has established effective partnerships with general and specialist health services and staff proactively promote the emotional, psychological and physical health needs of young people. Interventions provided by external agencies are further supported by staff through effective direct work sessions with young people. This means that young people profit from a holistic attitude to meeting their health needs. Medication monitoring systems are robust which endorses the health and welfare of young people.

Staff work with young people to pursue a range of activities and interests. These are incorporated in the daily routines of the home and individualised activity plans for young people. Young people enjoy group celebrations with each other and participate in events held by the wider organisation. These opportunities mean that young people develop a positive self-image and experience success.

Young people are supported to appreciate their culture and personal identity through life story work. In addition, staff assist young people to construct memory books that detail their time at the home. This means that young people are able to acknowledge the progress they have made and develop a sound understanding of their backgrounds

The home is well maintained and suitable located. Young people say they are involved in the decoration and furnishing of the home and are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe, and present as relaxed in the home. Staff ensure that detailed risk assessments are in place to protect young people from harm and promote their well-being and safety. Staff work with placing authorities and other professionals to identify the vulnerabilities of young people and put strategies in place to reduce known risks. Young people play an active role in this process and are encouraged to recognise risks and suggest measure to reduce these. Consequently, young people are supported to take appropriate risks to assist their transition towards adulthood. As a result, young people take responsibility for adhering to the contents of their plans.

Staff receive regular and advanced training in child protection and safeguarding. The home has personalised protocols in place with local police regarding young people who go missing from the home. Staff are able to identify behaviours and circumstances that cause incidents of missing from home and address these issues with young people during direct work sessions. Subsequently, young people are supported to make decisions that keep them safe.

Staff follow comprehensive behaviour management plans that highlight triggers to unacceptable behaviour. These provide staff with strategies for consistent interventions and de-escalation techniques. Young people benefit from continual verbal and written praise from staff and as a result, the use of sanctions is minimal. This means that young people are encouraged to consider the impact of their behaviour on others. Physical restraint is rare and only ever used as a last resort, and associated records are appropriately completed.

The manager ensures that any allegations against staff are promptly reported in line with safeguarding protocols, and dealt with transparently and timely. Complaints against young people including incidents of bullying are addressed immediately. Young people participate in regular education sessions around bullying. This means that young people have a sound understanding of the different types of bullying and how it can make people feel. Subsequently, young people realise that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated at the home.

Staff maintain health and safety records to a high standard. The manager has ensured additional monitoring systems are in place to complement statutory requirements. Young people regularly participate in fire tests and drills and understand the fire procedures in place.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently run by an experienced, enthusiastic and permanent manager. Young people and placing authorities are clear about the support the home provides, and the home meets the aims and objectives detailed in the Statement of Purpose. The manager and staff have a strong commitment to improving outcomes and the home delivers a tailored service that meets the individual needs of young people. The staff have an extensive range of skills and are proficient at identifying the welfare and care requirements of young people. This is confirmed by the exceptional progress young people make. As a result, young people work with staff who are able to meet their needs.

Young people and staff benefit from vibrant leadership. The manager is central to the daily running of the home and retains a clear overview and input regarding young people's progress. Managers and staff are able to recognise the strengths and weaknesses of the service and regularly identify approaches to improve services. The Registered Manager ensures that the home is well resourced and structured to endorse stability and consistency for young people.

Staff complete mandatory training that supports their role. In addition, the manager identifies supplementary training that reflects the more specific needs of young people. Staff say they feel empowered and involved in the development of the home and praise the commitment of the manager. They say they receive regular and effective supervision and participate in staff meetings. The manager is proactive at addressing any issues raised by young people during house meetings and provides timely feedback on any concerns. As a result, young people are confident that issues they raise will be taken seriously and appropriately addressed.

The manager has established excellent multi-agency working with other professionals and placing authorities. The home completes progress reports prior to statutory reviews and external agencies say that communication with the home is exceptional and informative. Staff encourage young people to attend their review meetings and communicate any changes they want to be included in their care plans. As a result, young people say they feel involved in decisions about their future.

The manager ensures various systems are in place to monitor the quality of care and outcomes for young people. However, these systems do not always identify patterns or trends. Risk assessments are robust and consider the impact on young people, although some of these lack specific detail. For example, it is not always clear if the use of bedroom door alarms pertain to individual young people or the residential group. The manager has devised a comprehensive development plan for the home.

Staff and managers review this plan monthly and identify strengths and areas for improvement. Young people are regularly consulted on the running of the home and managers take account of their suggestions. As a result, young people feel involved in the development of the home.

The home is maintained to a high standard and young people say they have been involved in decisions regarding furnishings. The manager ensures financial resources are available to address any decoration needed. All records are clear and securely stored. Case file records are detailed and regularly reviewed. This means they contribute to an understanding of young people's backgrounds, experiences, progress and future plans. Consequently, young people benefit from working with a well-informed staff team.

Young people develop in an environment where boundaries and expectations are clear and staff practice is consistent. Subsequently, the home has a positive impact on young people and improves their life chances through encouragement, dedication and care.

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.