

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Deborah White
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for four young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is operated by a private provider.

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 receive good quality care that meets their needs. The home takes account of the individual needs of each young person and promotes positive outcomes. Young people feel safe and feel listened to. Relationships with staff are positive and educational outcomes are very good.

Young people are appropriately placed and are progressing. Outcomes for young people making the transition into adulthood are very good. Young people are fit and healthy and enjoy a range of meaningful activities. Management of the home is strong and staff feel valued and supported. Feedback for this inspection is good and supports that young people are making good progress.

There are good elements in the home's monitoring but young people are not always consulted during regulation 34 visits. Development plans do not fully reflect how the home intends to maintain continual improvement and some young people's written plans do not fully include all known, assessed needs.

Generally, the home provides a suitable safe environment for young people to live in but there are some areas in need of re-decoration and privacy curtains.

There are four new recommendations arising from this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure placement plans are monitored within the home to ensure the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. Specifically where the home writes additional placement plans that record, and monitor how children will be cared for on a daily basis (NMS 25.2)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable homely environment that is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure regulation 33 visits must wherever possible include private interviews with children and young people living at the home (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes, paragraph 3.13)
- take actions to address any issues or concerns that they identify and, in particular, have development plans in place that understand the home's strengths and weaknesses. (NMS 21.9)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for young people are good. Young people are happy living at the home and feel the home meets their needs very well. Relationships with staff are positive and young people can talk openly about any worries or concerns they may have. This shows young people have formed appropriate bonds and attachments with the adults who care for them. Young people are consulted and listened to, which gives them a voice in making important decisions in their lives.

Educational outcomes are very good. Young people have good school attendance and are meeting their academic targets. School leavers are supported to make a smooth transition into employment, or further education, which enables a positive move towards securing a future career. A young person said, 'I am looking forward to going to college, I think this is a good move for me. I have my future planned out and I want to work hard and have a good job.'

Young people are fit and healthy and enjoy a range of leisure activities. Group and individual pastimes give each young person a choice of how to spend their free time and encourage self-development and team work experiences. This helps young people grow in confidence and gain feelings of positive well-being and self-esteem.

Young people are doing some very positive work making the transition into adulthood. They are included in all their pathways plans so they understand how they will be supported to reach their independence goals. Young people are experiencing how it will be to live in their own accommodation; with staff support close by if they need it. For example, young people are using budgeting skills and doing their own shopping and cooking. A social worker said, 'My young person is doing very well learning how to look after themselves. They have learned a lot of

useful skills, and they feel supported by the staff.'

Quality of care

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

Staff nurture good relationships that build trust and respect. Young people are listened to and their views are taken seriously. A staff member said, 'I think the most important thing is to listen, and not to talk. Young people sometimes feel they have no-one who listens to them. We respect our young people and think they are important. Some young people have had a difficult start, they need stability and they need to trust the adults who care for them.' Feedback for this inspection identifies good relationships as a strength of the home and young people confirm they get along very well with the staff team.

Staff know the young people and are familiar with young people's needs and how these will be met. Key-workers engage young people in one-to-one sessions to enable them to express their views and wishes. Young people feel consulted and that staff listen to them. Staff see each young person as an individual and have high aspirations for them.

The home has progressed in the standard of written residential plans. Plans composed by the home show young people are appropriately placed; however, not all needs are recorded or how they will be met on a day-to-day basis. This may potentially impact on young people's care where any important changes, in young people's lives or needs, are not recorded; evaluated or have measureable recorded outcomes.

Young people's health needs are assessed to ensure they receive the services they need. There is good partnership working with external professionals, agencies which contributes to good-quality consistent care. A professional working with the home said, 'Staff and the manager are professional in their approach and support my young person. Communication is good and I am kept up to date with any changes. My young person has definitely benefited from living at this home.'

Systems in place to deliver healthcare safely are robust, and known by staff. There are good, clear procedures to guide staff in the safe administration of medication. Regular staff training, including first-aid training, prepares staff for dealing with minor emergencies and case files include each young person's healthcare history. This informs staff of important milestones or any developmental concerns.

Young people's school attendance and educational achievements are important aspects of the home's ethos. Staff work with educational providers to support young people in achieving the best they can. Staff attend education reviews, to support young people, and regularly communicate with teachers to provide consistency in school work and young people's behaviour management. A social worker said 'My young person is doing well at school. Staff support young people to do their best.' Staff also provide access to a range of activities and encourage young people to keep

busy and occupied in positive interests and pastimes. Young people attend various local clubs, which helps them make new friends and feel part of their local community.

Young people live in a pleasant, homely environment that meets their needs. The home is spacious, to allow for privacy and quiet time. Each young person has their own bedroom that they can personalise to reflect their individuality. The enclosed garden provides a safe, private area for outdoor events. A young person has recently prepared a part of the garden to grow fresh vegetables to learn about gardening.

Generally the home is decorated and furnished to a good standard but there are some signs of wear and tear. For example, the walls in a number of rooms are marked and scuffed. Additionally, some windows do not have privacy curtains, or blinds, to stop young people being seen from outside, which may compromise privacy. The bathrooms and downstairs toilet are functional but look sparse and clinical, which takes away from the homely feel of the rest of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are and feel safe. Staff know what to do if they feel a child is at risk and know who to report any concerns to. Young people feel they can talk to staff and know how to contact their social worker if they have concerns about the home. There is information displayed about advocacy that is known to young people, which ensures young people are aware of how to access an advocate.

There is no bullying at the home and where there is known bullying, outside the home, staff proactively support young people to employ strategies to stay and feel safe. Young people understand that bullying is unacceptable and feel staff listen to their concerns. The home has written a countering-bullying handbook that is child-friendly and age appropriate. This provides good, informative written advice for young people.

There are good procedures to protect children who go missing. Staff know to look for children who go missing and records are kept to monitor incidents. There have been no restraints since the last inspection and behaviour management techniques are positive. A young person said, 'There is a bonus scheme that is good. I can earn extra money that I spend on things I like. It works well.'

Young people live in a safe environment. Health and Safety, and fire safety, risk assessments are carried out regularly to protect young people, staff and visitors. Generic risk assessments are carried out to reduce known environment risks and all utilities are regularly serviced to ensure they are in good working order.

Leadership and management

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

Leaders and managers are effective and lead a committed staff team. Staff feel the management of the home is strong and leadership at the home has improved since the Registered Manager took up their post. The home is organised and records are accessible to staff, which enables them to keep updated and informed. Feedback about the management of the home is positive. A social worker said 'The staff and manager are good. Communication is good and I am kept up to date. The manager contacts me regularly and is on the ball. The manager supports my young person and runs a good home.'

There have been no complaints since the last inspection. The home has progressed and developed services to young people that have resulted in good outcomes. For example, better inter-agency working has resulted in good educational outcomes; improved communication with placing social workers has provided for consistent care and good leadership has improved staff performance and staff morale.

A recommendation from the last inspection is met, which shows the home's drive to improve. Monthly regulation 34 monitoring, at the home, is good and safeguarding records are regularly checked to ensure good practice.

Regulation 33 reports are detailed and are provided to Ofsted in a timely manner. The visits and reports cover the required elements and actions arising from each visit are addressed by the Registered Manager. The visitor does not always consult with young people to ascertain their views and not all the visits are undertaken at a time where consultation with young people can be arranged. For example, some of the visits are conducted during school hours. This poses a potential risk that young people, especially those without family contact, do not regularly have the opportunity to talk to the visitor about any worries or concerns they may have about living at the home.

There is a development plan in place but the format does not clearly identify specific short and long-term goals that are based on evidence, from the home's monitoring, or consultation with young people and significant others. There are no detailed actions identifying who is responsible to meet the actions; what the predicted outcomes are or when these will be met. This potentially could result in plans for the home drifting and not being addressed in a timely manner to ensure changes and developments are consistent and have a positive impact.

Young people are cared for by staff who are trained, experienced and knowledgeable. Staff feel supported and receive regular formal supervision to look at their strengths and areas for development. Staff feel valued and listened too. Feedback for this inspection is indicative of the staff team being proactive, supportive to young people and committed to their role.

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.