

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Clare Davies
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is run by a private organisation. The home is registered to provide medium to long-term care for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people living in the home can attend a school also run by the provider and have access to in-house therapeutic support.

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 living in this home benefit from exceptionally warm and supportive relationships with the manager and staff team. This offers a sense of security and belonging where young people feel valued and consequently make good progress. Young people have made significant steps in reducing their involvement with damaging and risk-taking behaviours.

Young people are safe at this home and, on occasion, when they are considered at risk in the community, the staff work effectively with other agencies to ensure their safe return. Young people are involved in risk assessment, which ensures that they understand what measures they can take to protect themselves.

Records and documentation are child focused, enabling young people to participate with the records made during their placement. The views of young people are valued and captured through daily discussions, key work sessions, surveys and house meetings. This level of consultation helps shape the development of the home. Young people are actively involved in placement planning, they have highly personalised plans to support them in all aspects of their development.

The management of this home is committed to continual improvement. Effective monitoring contributes to the development of this service. One recommendation has been made with regards to staff training in supervisory skills.

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 young people are looked after by staff who are trained and competent to meet their needs. In particular, ensure that senior staff are trained in supervisory skills. (NMS 18)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make significant progress with the support of the manager and staff team. The therapeutic environment enables young people to develop strong relationships with staff and other professionals. This leads to engagement and therefore the ability to address aspects of their social and emotional development. Young people receive support to have an understanding of their background and early childhood experiences. This knowledge equips young people to make sense of their situation and provide a platform from which to move forward in their lives.

Young people are supported to make healthy choices. The amount of food and drink with a high sugar content is monitored, and freshly prepared meals encourage young people to try new foods. The involvement in menu planning, shopping and cooking promotes a balanced healthy diet. Young people are supported to access community health services for routine appointments and specialist advice regarding sexual health, smoking and drug use. Young people who engage in risk-taking behaviours are effectively supported as evidenced by the reduction in such incidents.

Young people are engaging with education. The manager and staff recognise the need for a creative approach to provide education that will meet the needs of individuals. Mainstream, the provider's school or home tuition can be accessed. Young people in placement have good attendance in education and are making progress in their learning. This is a significant achievement considering the previous educational experiences young people have had. Some young people have progressed from non-attendance to engaging for half an hour and now half a day, this improvement has occurred within a few months.

Young people are happy in their placement, they say that they like the staff and get on well with them. One young person reported in a survey, 'There is nothing I would like to change about (this home), I am very happy here.' Young people report how they trust the staff, which leads to respect for each other and the home. The respect for the environment is evident in the quality of the appearance of the home and lack of any damage for several months. Young people are able to decorate their bedrooms with art work and develop a sense of pride for their personal space. Walls are decorated throughout the home with inspirational words, photographs and certificates to celebrate success and fun times. Chalk boards are used to give daily

positive messages to young people from the staff, young people like this and in return occasionally write messages to the staff.

Where appropriate, contact with family and friends is supported. Young people are prepared for such visits and good communication contributes to positive meetings. The manager seeks feedback from family members about the quality of care provided and parents report positively praising the staff team as they are pleased with the progress their child is making.

Young people contribute to the daily chores within the home and through this develop some independence skills. The programme for independence, that young people can work through with staff, supports them with living skills and money management in preparation for when they become young adults.

Quality of care

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

Young people are at the centre of all practice in this home. The manager and staff team strive to deliver consistent high quality care, providing a warm nurturing environment where young people feel valued. 'I like how the staff treat me,' states one young person.

Young people benefit from strong relationships with the manager and the staff team. The ethos of the home fosters open and honest communication between young people and the adults, which has led to mutual respect. This home adopts a secure base model to provide a therapeutic environment. Staff are trained in this model of care, supported by the manager and a therapist to enable them to deliver this effectively. This leads to daily reflection on care practices and a learning environment for staff to raise standards. The therapist is available to work directly with young people and provide advice and support to staff. This ready access to a therapist enables young people to receive prompt support and not rely on a referral to community health services.

The flexible approach to education ensures that young people are in the learning environment that is best suited to them. Staff support young people with their education through reading, games and promoting independent learning. Outside school time, young people are encouraged and supported to access leisure facilities and local events. Displays of photographs in the home capture these activities and are later stored in each young person's memory box. This contributes to a record for young people to look back on in future years.

Young people are fully involved in the running and development of the home and more significantly they are supported to fully participate in decision making about their placement. Young people regularly write their own daily record, this enables them to reflect on their day and consider their achievements and any difficulties. In consultation with young people, changes have been made to the names of records. For example, any sanction for negative behaviour is recorded as 'I need support',

and positive comments are noted as 'I am brilliant'. The complaints log is now labelled, 'Oops what went wrong?'. The involvement of young people in record keeping and access to the office promotes a culture of trust that enables young people to have a good foundation on which to develop sound relationships.

Young people fully understand how to make a complaint and have done so with satisfactory outcomes. The strength of relationships with staff enable young people to raise any concerns they may have with ease, young people trust the staff to sort things out.

Excellent placement plans identify individual needs and how they will be met. Young people are fully involved with these plans and know what areas of personal development they are working towards. The plans assist young people in identifying all the other significant people in their lives and what role they play from family members to professionals. There is a strong commitment to inter-agency working and social care professionals report very positively about this home. The following comments describe the high calibre of care provided, 'this is a safe place where young people can move forward', 'the young person is always positive about this placement, he seems happy and has very good relationships with staff. He has stability from this placement.'

Staff, visitors and most importantly, young people, all describe this environment as 'homely'. Attention to detail ensures that there is no institutional look and the cottage building with a quirky layout supports this family-style home. Only the storage area for cleaning products and the office are locked rooms, and the manager aims to have an 'open door' to the office wherever possible. The home is located in a rural setting, relying on transport to the nearest town, however some public transport is available.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel safe in this placement. The strength of relationships between young people and the staff team underpin this safe environment. The reduction in risk taking and negative behaviours provides an indicator of the stability that they are experiencing. Young people that were involved in high risk behaviours and criminal activity are settled and have not been involved in such incidents for many months.

Risk assessments are excellent working documents listing any incident of concern. They provides a clear record of events and a traffic light system effectively indicates the severity. Young people are fully involved in discussing risks and what strategies will support them. There are incidents of young people going missing and staff follow a clear protocol with the police. Staff actively look for young people and maintain contact through mobile telephones. This informs young people that the staff team care about them and want to support them with their safe return.

Staff are trained in the management and de-escalation of behaviour. There is

minimal use of physical intervention, the emphasis is to support young people in making appropriate choices. Young people are fully aware of any consequences of negative behaviour as they have been instrumental in deciding house rules and sanctions. This is effective, as young people gain financial incentives and rewards, receive less consequences and there has been no need for physical intervention over the last four months.

This organisation adopts a robust procedure to employ new staff following safer recruitment practices. This ensures that young people are cared for by adults who have been checked for suitability to work in a children's home. The manager and staff team receive training in safeguarding matters. As a result, they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being.

Matters of health and safety are routinely checked and repairs are promptly attended to. As a result young people benefit from living in a safe environment and this has a positive impact on their welfare. Staff and young people experience evacuation practice in the event of a fire, this ensures everyone knows what action to take and where to gather safely.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from living in a home that is effectively managed. The Registered Manager has made significant improvements in the first year of her appointment. The home is very well organised and staffed to provide young people with stability and consistency of care. The manager is both approachable and supportive, which is appreciated by staff, social care professionals and young people.

The manager is keen to promote the service and strive for continual improvement. This is evident through the engagement and involvement of young people, and the changes made to be more child focused in language and documentation. Effective monitoring ensures the manager and staff team have an accurate assessment of the strengths and areas for development, this knowledge and a self assessment contribute to the development plan.

The staff team is enthusiastic about their work and demonstrates a commitment to supporting young people in achieving good outcomes and beyond. Staff members feel supported in their work through regular supervision, training and clear policies and procedures to underpin their practice. Reflective diaries support the staff in working to the therapeutic model. Regular de-briefs and staff meetings are held, these provide forums to discuss practice and professional development. Staff members are very positive about mutual support and the strength of the team. One person described their place of work, 'like their extended family'.

The organisation arranges training for staff at this home and others locally. This ensures that mandatory training is delivered, but the programme lacks planning. In

response, there are plans to have an annual training programme set up for 2014. This will include training to support the therapeutic model and enable a more flexible response to identified training needs. Not all senior staff with supervisory responsibilities have received training in this area of staff management. The manager and a senior member of staff are working towards the diploma in health and social care at level 5. This qualification will further strengthen the leadership and management of this home.

The manager is an effective communicator, working in collaboration with other professionals and appropriately informs Ofsted of any significant events. The manager has leadership qualities and enables staff members to solve problems and make decisions themselves as part of their learning and professional development. This strengthens the staff team as they recognise their responsibilities, and their contribution to the team and overall effectiveness of the service.

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.