

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Dawn Bennett
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The service is operated by a private company and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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**.

This is a good service. Young people are making adequate progress as they at times present high risk behaviours and do not always choose to engage with aspects of their placement plans. The home has a dedicated staff team who are working hard to form positive relationships with young people and challenge high risk behaviours. Young people enjoy warm, positive and constructive relationships with staff, underpinned by a clear framework of expectations. Staff are well-managed by an experienced Registered Manager who ensures they are well supported. This enhances staff's ability to promote the welfare of young people and keep them safe. There is regular internal management scrutiny of care practice in the home. Working relationships with other professionals, for example education, police and social workers are strong and this helps safeguard young people and promote their well-being.

Three recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. Improvements to the safe handling of medication, more detailed records of key worker sessions and key discussions and for maintenance required in the home's grounds to be completed by the end of February 2013.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's environment is well maintained and avoidable hazards are removed. This recommendation is made with particular regard to the driveway, parking area and gates to the rear of the garden (NMS 10.3)
- ensure suitable arrangements for the safe handling of medication. This recommendation is made with particular regard to staff being able to safely handle tablets and carry out stock checks (Volume 5: Children's Homes 2.51)
- ensure information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make positive progress in some aspects of their lives but adequate progress overall with some continuing to exhibit patterns of high risk behaviours.

Young people have an understanding of the aims of their placement because they meet with the Registered Manager on a regular basis and they participate in their reviews. The work undertaken by young people with the support of the staff team helps them talk about a wide range of topics and issues. However, some young people are choosing not to work positively with staff to meet the aims of their placement plan.

Young people are helped to keep healthy. There are systems and services in place to address young people's health including their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being. The staff team support them to attend medical appointments and take any prescribed medication on a regular basis. Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles and are always encouraged to take an interest in looking after their own physical and emotional needs. Young people are involved in planning, preparing and eating a healthy diet and encouraged to take part in physical exercise. Young people understand the concept of healthy living but have not embraced the concept in every aspect of their life. For example, some smoke even though they understand smoking is not good for them, others choose not to attend medical appointments or engage with health specialists and some young people's high risk behaviours present serious health risks.

Some young people benefit from appropriate contact with family and other people who are important to them. Other young people struggle with contact arrangements which on occasions lead to incidents of high risk behaviours such as going missing or self-harm. Staff support young people to maintain contact with their family because they understand the importance of these links. They also monitor the emotional impact of visits and where appropriate put additional systems in place to safeguard young people.

Overall young people are making adequate educational progress. Young people, who have been excluded from school or not attended, are encouraged to re-engage in

learning and achieve vocational and academic qualifications. The staff team promote education and encourage regular attendance and educational progress. They support young people in college and those attending their own registered school. Some young people do have good attendance in full-time education; however, their educational progress is adequate. Others are attending further education on a very part-time basis and do not always engage with the structure put in place by the home's staff for the rest of the week.

Young people experience and participate in new hobbies, which enhance their social development and self-esteem. Staff have excellent knowledge of the local area, activities and resources. They encourage young people to develop existing interests or find new ones. Young people respond well to this and are involved in a range of community based youth clubs, music workshops and sporting activities.

Quality of care

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

The staff team effectively engage young people who at times exhibit challenging high risk behaviours. They form positive relationships with young people and work hard to impact on these behaviours. They seek the views and wishes of young people and make sure they know how to complain and that they feel safe. One young person who had only been at the home for a short time stated of staff, 'they listen and if you have a question or query they go away and sort it out.'

Each young person has a placement plan and risk assessments that are regularly reviewed. These enable staff to meet the individual needs of young people and include positive strategies to support young people to develop skills such as managing conflict and reducing risks. All progress is monitored through daily and monthly reports, which feed into regular statutory reviews. These reports are shared with social workers. Overall the quality of reports are good. However, key worker sessions and important one-to-one discussions do not consistently contain evidence of how a young person is being supported to progress.

Staff are trained in the safe storage and administration of medication and there are good procedures in place. However, staff do not have the equipment to count tablets without handling them when undertaking a stock check.

Young people are experiencing positive relationships, which develops emotional resilience. They are relaxed in the company of staff and are quick to approach them with any issues they may have. In young people's meetings they have the opportunity to express their views and influence what is happening in their lives. As a result they feel that their views are taken into consideration, for example, planning evening and weekend activities, planning menus and decorating the house and their bedrooms.

Young people feel ownership of the environment and learn the skills required to manage a household. Depending upon their age and ability they are encouraged to

develop independence skills and are rewarded for their involvement. All young people keep their own bedrooms tidy and play a part in completing household tasks. As they become older they play a greater role in learning other life skills such as cooking and budgeting. Where appropriate staff work through an independence programme, which allows them to assess individual's skills and identify areas for development.

The design and layout of the home meets the needs of the current young people accommodated. The house, downstairs in the communal areas, is well maintained and tidy. It is an environment that young people enjoy living in. There are adequate toilets, bathrooms, individual rooms and space requirements for all the young people. Young people are able to personalise their rooms to reflect their individuality, personal taste and culture. Major work to the home's driveway, parking area and gates to the rear of the property has been delayed. There is clear evidence that this is being chased by the Registered Manager and Responsible Individual. Dates have been set for completion by the end of February 2013. Risk assessments have been undertaken, and work has been completed in the short-term to reduce any immediate risks.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe in the home. They are systematically protected from harm by robust arrangements for safe welfare. For example, there are effective policies on ensuring the safety and well-being of young people, which are known to young people, parents and staff. These underpin a programme of induction and training for all staff that includes promoting positive behaviour. This ensures all policies are implemented successfully in practice.

The home promotes each young person's welfare and ensures their safety is paramount. Due to the high risk behaviours young people present when they are placed there is a high ratio of staff on duty at any time. They are skilled at managing the environment and activities in ways that safeguard the young person, themselves and others. There are effective systems in place that support the staff team including handovers, behaviour management plans and assessments of risk. All ensure up-to-date information is passed on, which enables staff to make informed decisions and manage difficult situations. Staff are very aware of the vulnerability issues for young people who put themselves at risk. There is continual debate and discussion with regard to the important balance between promoting independence and keeping young people safe.

This effective management and high staff ratios mean that significant incidents such as absconding, self-harm, criminal or violent behaviour, in the majority of cases reduce or stabilise over time. However, high risk incidents do still occur. These are managed well, often in partnership with external agencies. Where patterns of behaviour do not decrease and young people continue to present a high risk the provider works with the placing authority to find an alternative placement.

Young people placed at the home have complex emotional and behavioural difficulties and often display challenging behaviours. The staff reinforce positive behaviour and this supports young people to develop self-esteem, self-belief and respect for others. Staff ensure that young people are cared for in ways that meets their needs, takes account of their choices and treats them in a dignified way. Young people understand that staff speak to them respectfully and listen to what they say. Young people are very clear of their rights and feel staff are 'fair'. Since the home has opened there has been minimal use of sanctions or physical interventions.

Young people's safety is promoted by an established health and safety policy, which ensures risks are identified and appropriate action is taken to manage and reduce them. Young people and staff are involved in fire drills and there are regular checks on all fire and electrical equipment to ensure it is in good working order. All staff are appropriately trained in health and safety matters including first aid and fire awareness.

Leadership and management

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

This is the home's first inspection since being registered by Ofsted. There were therefore no previous requirements or recommendations.

The Registered Manager and staff team have a very clear view of the aims and objectives of this service. In turn they communicate this effectively to the young people, parents and local authorities who come to the home.

The Registered Manager manages the staff team effectively and is well respected. The staff team are experienced and clear about their roles and responsibilities. They attend regular supervisions and team meetings and see these as positive opportunities to reflect on practice. Staff feel that their training needs are well met and that they work together well as a team. This enhances their abilities to promote the welfare of young people and keep them safe.

Records are clear and up-to-date and the home is thorough in ensuring that appropriate authorities are informed following significant incidents.

This service has substantial strengths. Where areas for improvement emerge the service recognises and manages them well. The organisation and Registered Manager ensure effective monitoring and evaluation of relevant records and events such as the complaints and child protection. This monitoring and consultation and regular communication ensures proper scrutiny and on-going development of the young people's 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* and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.