

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is run by a private organisation to provide care and accommodation for up to 4 young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It provides an on-site school.

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 living in a homely, safe environment with effective support from care staff who promote stability and personal development. Young people receive personalised well-planned care that takes account of their diverse needs. As a result, outcomes for young people are good. The views, wishes and feelings of young people are central to the good care practice of the home. Staff keep young people safe and they in turn feel secure and protected. Young people are very settled in the home, which provides a good foundation for their future plans and arrangements.

Staff work together with therapists, teachers and external services to ensure young people get the right help, guidance and support they need. Dedicated one-to-one time with each young person ensures they receive the care and attention they require in order to have their needs appropriately met. Staff receive training, supervision and support that enables them to have a better understanding of young people's needs and how they are to be met.

On occasions, identified 'staff to young people' ratios are not always followed in practice; it is not clear which young people have been assessed as not needing this level of supervision. Also, the home's Statement of Purpose is not up to date or fully reflective of the home's operation and required information. Currently, these shortfalls are minor and do not impact negatively on the young people living at the home presently.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
4 (2001)	keep under review and where appropriate revise the Statement of Purpose to ensure it reflects all matters listed in Schedule 1. (Regulation 4(5)(a))	30/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the overall number of staff and the number deployed both as a staff group and on individual shifts can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all young people resident in the home. (NMS 17.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are fully supported to improve their self-esteem and develop safe relationships that help boost their confidence and well-being. Staff create a positive home environment because young people experience individualised support that is matched to their needs and personalities. Young people make good progress in relation to their previous circumstances, establishing social and domestic routines that achieve stability and opportunities for recovery.

Young people benefit from planned and supported contact with family and friends. Staff maintain close links with families and involve them where appropriate in the overall planning of young people's care. Detailed contact plans ensure that contact only takes place with whom it has been agreed and this is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure young people are safe.

Young people are well supported through their education, vocational training or work experience placements. Staff have access to detailed information about individual needs and abilities and this helps them provide the right support for each young person. The staff team work in partnership with the home's teachers and are enthusiastic about promoting young people's learning and development. Young people's education and learning arrangements are diverse. This is because staff take the time and energy to listen to each young person to help shape arrangements according to individual aims and aspirations.

Young people learn about healthy lifestyles and the importance of looking after their health. This is because staff have good links with agencies and professionals who can provide specialist help when needed. For instance, young people who wish to stop smoking are given speedy assistance to do so; they also have access to a range of practical therapies to help them overcome other addictions. Young people's emotional well-being is also supported by the home's in-house therapy team who can provide tailored support to young people as well as guide and advise the Registered Manager and staff group.

Young people are developing independence and responsibility in line with their circumstances, understanding and current levels of risk. Young people's personal development benefits from an open approach to learning new skills, forming new attachments and expanding leisure and social activities. Young people enjoy active involvement in the community. For example, by using local youth clubs and following their individual interests, such as dancing and going to the cinema.

Quality of care

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

Staff develop warm, caring relationships with young people based on openness, honesty and respect. As a result, young people are provided with familiar routines and clear boundaries to help promote good or improving behaviours. Experienced staff provide good quality care, ensuring young people are supported in line with their plans and wishes. Young people are visited by their social workers to check on their welfare, development and progress.

Care planning effectively takes into account the diverse needs of young people and reflects individual circumstances, backgrounds and identities. Young people's views, wishes and feelings influence what happens in the home and decisions about their care. For example, young people have recently raised a concern about not having access to adequate levels of transport to support family contact arrangements and leisure activities. This has now been addressed because the home has increased the number of vehicles available for staff to use. Young people know how to complain because staff take the time to ensure they understand the different ways they can do this. Young people feel enabled and are confident in the home's ability to deal with any concerns they have.

Young people benefit from a staff group who care about them and who are committed to promoting their welfare and safety. Staff work hard to motivate and educate young people when making decisions about their lives and future arrangements. Young people have regular one-to-one time with their key workers so they can talk about matters that are important to them. Young people appreciate and value their key worker relationships and identify this as being a very positive aspect of living at the home.

Young people are provided with living accommodation that is spacious, comfortable,

clean and tidy. Good domestic routines are in place, which young people are involved in completing. Staff ensure that there ample opportunities to help young people access local shops and services to reduce the impact of the home being in a rural location.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people receive a high level of support in order to maintain their overall safety and well-being. Young people feel safe in the home and with the staff who look after them. Staff consistently achieve a safe, homely environment in which young people can feel comfortable with their relationships and surroundings. Clear and coordinated risk management practices assist young people to understand issues regarding risk taking behaviours and personal safety. This process is proving successful in helping young people to acknowledge and understand risk factors in their lives.

Staff focus on de-escalation and re-direction techniques in order to defuse escalating situations and difficulties. As a result, there have been very few physical interventions since the home was registered. Staff promote a zero tolerance approach to bullying and work to ensure young people are provided with the right support and guidance to recognise and challenge this kind of behaviour. Young people confirm that bullying does not take place and feel confident that should the matter arise, staff will take the appropriate action. Staff demonstrate vigilance in monitoring young people in the home, community and school to ensure their continued protection. Young people benefit from the consistent, competent and experienced approach from staff, who avoid institutional measures such as the use of formal sanctions. This approach helps each young person experience positive dialogue that helps them make changes for the better.

Staff know what to do if a young person is away from the home without permission and they use individual risk assessments to inform their practice and reporting procedures. Young people know and understand that prompt and early action will be taken to determine their whereabouts and gain their safe return home. Young people who have significant histories of being missing from care and who are vulnerable to exploitation are at less risk now because staff have been successful at helping them change their behaviours. Young people rarely go missing because of the work undertaken by Registered Manager and the staff team. Young people have made significant progress in this area of their lives.

Staff promote young people's on-going protection by undertaking regular fire drills and tests of fire prevention equipment. Stringent monitoring of all matters relating to health and safety are carried out consistently including the appropriate storage and administration of medication. Health and safety risk assessments are regularly reviewed and internal checks are consistently undertaken in order to maintain the overall safety of young people and staff. The home uses a safe recruitment procedure that ensures young people are looked after by staff who have been appropriately checked and vetted. Visitors are appropriately screened and this helps

to make sure that young people are further protected while in their home.

Leadership and management

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

There is strong, experienced management of the home that guides and secures good progress for young people. Rigorous monitoring of care practice and service delivery helps support this newly registered service improve and develop. This is demonstrated by the reducing recommendations made as a result of monthly monitoring visits carried out by an external manager. Reports continue to show action being taken by the Registered Manager to address identified shortfalls and to achieve improving outcomes for young people. In addition, the Registered Manager's own internal monitoring provides key information about how the home is operating and the quality of care being delivered. This information also includes a good range of returned questionnaires from visiting professionals that reflect positive comments and observations about the service.

Staff are managed in a way that encourages regular reflection of their work which in turn helps identify ways of improving the service. Staff experience a supportive working environment with improving arrangements for one-to-one supervision. This approach is part of the Registered Manager's wider practice that also involves consultation with other groups including the in-house therapeutic and education teams. These partnerships and supervision arrangements exist solely to support staff in channelling their efforts and shaping their practice for the benefit of young people.

There are comprehensive arrangements for staff training and development. This covers staff induction, basic training, achieving required qualifications and more detailed training around the specific needs of young people. For instance, staff have received training around matters relating to child sexual exploitation, self-harm, human trafficking and therapeutic approaches to care. As well as ensuring key skills are kept up to date, the registered provider intends to expand the knowledge and understanding of the staff team around therapeutic practice but this has only just started to be developed.

Generally, the number of staff on duty is always enough to meet the needs young people in support of their welfare and protection. On occasions, staffing ratios are not matched to the identified needs of the resident group. Although young people have been assessed as needing one-to-one supervision this is sometimes diluted by having three staff on duty with four young people. Although the manager closely monitors these arrangements, it is not clear which young people have been assessed as not needing one-to-one support. These circumstances are infrequent and do not negatively impact on the current resident group.

Young people, social workers and staff are clear about what the service is expected to achieve and the way in which care and support is provided. Overall, the home meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose but some information is missing or out of date. The document places a strong emphasis on matching and

planning for new arrivals, so full consideration can be given to the existing group of young people. However, the Statement of Purpose does not clearly describe how emergency admissions will be managed in this context. Also, the Statement of Purpose describes a particular therapeutic approach that will be used by residential staff but this is not currently being provided.

Overall, the home demonstrates capacity to improve and develop. The Registered Manager and staff team demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering good childcare practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is measurable by the good progress young people are currently making.

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.