

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Pamela Nuckley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately-operated children's home provides care for two young people, who may have emotional or 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 an established home which has recently been taken over by a large private company. The Registered Manager and a stable staff team remain in place.

Young people make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points, physically, mentally, socially and educationally. Young people thrive in a nurturing, supportive environment, with clear structures and boundaries in place.

The young people are included, wherever possible in the running of the home, and this encourages them to gain confidence and feel that their opinions are important. The staff are fair but firm and young people are fully aware of staff's expectations of them. Young people say this has helped them excel during their placements in this home.

Young people benefit from an experienced, cohesive, staff team who see the importance of celebrating diversity and encouraging young people to feel special. The high level of qualified and motivated staff, supported by an enthusiastic manager, is an obvious strength of the home and this is positively reflected in the care of young people. Feedback from professionals who visit the home is overwhelmingly positive. Professionals, parents and carers and young people are extremely happy with the care provided at the home.

Young people benefit from sound relationships with staff and feel that adults care about their welfare. Good safeguarding practice promotes the safety of young people who feel safe within this home. The committed staff work hard to enable young people to reach their potential within education and young people's health needs are

prioritised.

The management team understand the strengths and areas of future development for the home. They use consultation with young people effectively and the manager is proactive on continuing to develop all areas within the home. The staff are highly committed to supporting and enabling young people to develop their skills and socially acceptable behaviour. However, areas for development relate to the completion of risk assessments for all young people who have a history of self-harm; the assessment of young people's life skills for moving into independence and the systems for monitoring the quality of care.

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
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the visit prepares a written report on the conduct of the home. Specifically in relation to ensuring that the monitoring of the records is robust and has enough detail to form an opinion on the quality of care given (Regulation 33 (4) (c))	30/06/2013
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. This is specifically in relation to ensuring self-harm risk assessments are carried out. (Regulation 11 (1) (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 that children receive care which helps them to prepare and supports them into adulthood. (NMS 12.1 (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g))

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people are fully included in all aspects of the home and any plans or records maintained for them. Young people are encouraged to reach their potential based on

their individual and diverse needs. Staff take pride in the young people's achievements and of the progress they have made. Young people talk confidently about their achievements.

Young people benefit from individualised support which helps them grow in confidence. Young people develop their own identities through supportive staff and access to personal interests in the community.

The home actively acknowledges racial, religious, gender and other differences and encourages open discussion and learning on such issues. Mementoes, memories and achievements are recorded and saved for young people so they have an understanding of their past and background for their future. As a result, young people develop a positive self-view.

Young people enjoy a balanced diet and lead active lifestyles, which keeps them healthy. Young people access suitable medical services and receive additional support from therapeutic agencies. This means they receive personalised and age-appropriate healthcare.

Young people enjoy opportunities to plan for individual or group activities and in the running of the home. They are actively and positively involved in a range of activities both in the home and out in the community. Through participation in these they have new experiences; learn new skills and grow in confidence.

The educational outcomes for young people based on their starting points when first admitted are outstanding. Young people have overcome significant educational difficulties. They now regularly attend school where they are making exceptional progress and achieving. One young person who has been out of mainstream education for over two years and only been in placement for four months is currently working towards eleven exams. She says 'I never thought I would sit exams. I may not get the results I want but to have the opportunity is fantastic.' She continues to say 'I want to be a carer. I hope I can give someone what staff have given me here'. Another young person who was being home tutored now attends mainstream school in the area. She said 'I like school. I am making new friends and I am going to big school in September.

Young people say that they love living at this home and do not want to leave. One young person said 'the staff are fantastic. They show every day that they care and want you to do well.' One young person said 'when I first came here I cried and wanted to go home but now if I cannot back to my family, which is the plan, I want to stay here.' They believe by being genuinely interested in young people's lives, motivates them and consequently young people respond consistently to this.

Young people maintain constructive contact with families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives; largely as a result of the practical and financial support given. Any issues arising are handled sensitively and supportively by staff; enabling young people to develop emotional resilience and knowledge and understanding of their background.

One young person at this home is approaching semi-independence age. However, the local authority's pathway plan is not implemented until they are sixteen and half years of age. The young person says she is competent in many areas and said she was able to take good care of herself. However, the home does not demonstrate sufficiently how they have assessed young people's life skills to support them into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people in the home are appropriately placed. Their needs are assessed appropriately and care plans detail how these are to be met. Service specific placement plans contain good records which are updated appropriately. These include all relevant information about care, diet and support given to young people and reflect progress made.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for all children and young people in the home. Staff are skilled and engage positively with young. This promotes mutual respect. A nurturing environment and good communication enables good relationships to be formed between staff and the young people. One parent attributed her child's improvement to staff, saying, 'she is like a different person. The change in her is dramatic. She has matured so much its unbelievable. I cannot thank staff enough.'

Young people influence the running of the home and have their voices heard through participating in regular house meetings and consultation sessions. Young people feel confident to discuss any concerns or complaints and where differences of opinion arise young people feel they are listened to. Staff consistently support young people in understanding why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases. Information about making complaints is available in variety of forms and young people know the different avenues through which they can make complaints..

Staff successfully use positive behaviour management strategies, risk assessments and individualised care planning as a means of supporting young people to develop skills in managing their behaviour. Excellent communication, discussion and incentive charts effectively address negative behaviour. Young people value the support and guidance they receive and say this has improved their self-esteem. One young person said, 'Staff here are strict but fair. I was allowed to do things at home that I should not have been doing, like staying out late. I now realise that I was too young.' As a result of these interventions, physical intervention has not been used and the behaviour of young people has significantly improved.

Young people's health needs are prioritised and young people have regular access to health services specific to their needs. Health promotion is a prominent feature at the home. The physical, emotional and mental health needs of each young person are identified on admission and comprehensively supported throughout their stay. For

example, excellent partnership working with health professionals means the home provides holistic care for young people. Records of appointments with health professionals are clearly maintained ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health needs of young people are met. Young people live in a healthy environment. They receive the individual support they require from staff to lead a healthy lifestyle; they eat well and their health needs are well met. Staff encourage young people to take responsibility for looking after their own physical and emotional health, appropriate to their age and understanding. Young people are educated and encouraged to eat a healthy and balanced diet. This is a valuable learning experience for the young people who will be moving on to semi-independence. There is excellent guidance available within the home on a range of health and social issues including the dangers of smoking, sexual health and alcohol and substance misuse. Due to this, one young person has significantly reduced the amount of cigarettes she smokes and is hoping to quit soon.

Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of all medication. All young people are registered with a local general practitioner, dentist and optician. Young people's individual health needs are understood by staff and met on a daily basis. Staff excel in this area because they research, in depth, all medical conditions and attain literature for young people and themselves. This then gives them both insights into how some conditions or medication can impact on every day issues such as a young people's emotional well-being.

Young people thrive in a supportive and nurturing environment. Staff encourage young people to plan their recreation time effectively and engage in purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities. Young people develop confidence by establishing relationships outside the home and pursuing personal interests, such as joining the Territorial Army. The home provides any equipment necessary for taking part in associated activities, such as camping weekends which ensures young people are not disadvantaged in relation to their peers. A young person's social worker said of the activities provided, 'this has been one of the most positive things for her. She has made appropriate friendships and is enjoying being a teenager.'

The home offers a range of fun, leisure and educational activities which are planned alongside young people. They regularly access leisure activities in the community and visit family or friends: enjoying opportunities similar to those of young people of the same age. In addition the home provides young people with a wide range of resources such as age-appropriate up-to-date books, literature and board games. There is also a computer which young people can access safely for homework and leisure.

Young people's education is highly valued at this home. Staff show this by: making sure young people are ready for their day; showing interest in how their day went: assisting them with homework and by celebrating any achievement or progress made. Staff liaise well with schools; attend any meeting or significant events and support young people in accessing out of school activities, such as netball and swimming. Young people feel fully supported in their education and are making good progress.

Young people live in a very comfortable that has recently been refurbished to a good standard and meets the needs of the young people well. The home provides suitable facilities for young people to study, with sufficient learning materials available to them, and room to invite friends or family to visit. Young people are encouraged to take ownership of the home and treat the building with respect. Young people said they 'love living at the home.' They have personalised their bedrooms which reflect their interests and contain posters, photographs and mementoes. The home has a very relaxed atmosphere.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe and protected within the home. They can openly talk to their carers over their worries and concerns, and feel that the adults listen well and care about their welfare. The home has clear, well understood and effective risk management strategies in place. Overall these recognise the needs of young people well and provide suitable strategies to manage any associated risks. The staff group is skilled at recognising and managing risk taking behaviour and consistently implement the agreed strategies to reduce risks to young people. However, improvement is needed in the risk assessment for the potential for self-harm as this was cause for concern previously and risk assessments do not fully reflect this. As a consequence, staff do not have all the information available to them to fully safeguard young people.

Safeguarding policies and procedural guidance is consistent with the protocols of the local safeguarding team. Staff are well trained and clear about their responsibilities and the action to take in relation to safeguarding concerns. This ensures that young people are protected from abuse. Child protection incidents at the home are dealt with appropriately and all professionals notified within appropriate timescales.

Young people who previously had a history of frequent absence from care have significantly reduced this behaviour. Young people say this is because they feel very safe here, enjoy being here and now realise the risks that they put themselves at. One young person said, 'I use to stay out a lot but I now know I was silly and I could have been harmed.' A social worker commented on the excellent work staff have done in ensuring that their young person understands the concerns that all adults had. The improvement is aided by staff that know the action to take to should a young person go missing. There are sound systems in place to notify the appropriate authorities of any significant events and the home works well with local police: all of which helps keep young people safe.

Young people are protected from bullying. Staff are vigilant with regard to relationships within the home. High supervision levels mean that there are limited opportunities for bullying or inappropriate relationships to develop. Young people report that there are no issues regarding bullying and have confidence that staff would address any issues should they arise. Young people's privacy is well respected

and information is handled in a confidential manner. Young people's records are stored appropriately to protect their confidentiality and staff understand the importance of maintaining confidentiality.

The young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour through sound relationships with the staff and positive reinforcement of good behaviour. Staff know the young people well, and good communication ensures there is a consistent approach to any issues arising with the young people's behaviour. Staff meetings give the staff a chance to share information about each young person, and careful consideration is given to the handling of negative issues and promoting acceptable behaviour. There are very few sanctions given by staff and physical intervention has not been used. The behaviour and attitude of the young people is outstanding.

Young people's health and safety is protected by robust vetting of visitors to the home to prevent young people being exposed to unsuitable people. No member of staff is allowed to work in the home until full checks are completed and records confirm all visitors' sign in and out of the building and are appropriately supervised. This helps ensure their safety.

Young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. There are no major hazards to compromise welfare. Fire safety and health and safety checks are carried out at the required intervals. The home has established systems in place and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations.

Leadership and management

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

The manager effectively manages her time between three homes. Two homes are of single occupancy. There are clear arrangements for deputising in her absence. The provider meets all of the aims and objectives in their Statement of Purpose which is clear and accessible.

Young people benefit from effective management which models a commitment to meeting the needs of all young people. Young people are guided through and know what services they can expect from the home, how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with.

Young people enjoy the stability of an efficiently-run home with a stable, motivated and dedicated staff team and an enthusiastic manager. The manager is self-motivated, imaginative and forward-thinking. She encourages staff to develop themselves and shares her knowledge with them.

The manager has made significant improvements within the home and is constantly looking forward to develop all areas. She does this by consulting with young people, staff and other professionals. Therefore, staff and young people feel that they are truly involved in all aspects of the home. Staff are knowledgeable, are supported in all areas and are rightly proud of their home. This reflects in the care they given to

young people and in the excellent outcomes young people achieve.

Monthly visits are made to monitor the conduct of the home in line with Regulation 33. However, the reports produced following each visit are not robust. They do not reflect the excellent outcomes for young people at this home or identify the improvements made or needed. This impacts on the manager's ability to address issues within her own quality assurance monitoring reports. Young people are consulted within the quality assurance processes. The provider acknowledged that these reports do not give the reader a thorough synopsis of the home and has already made arrangements for training in these areas.

Staffing levels are high in number and allow young people to receive individual attention and care. Staff are well trained and qualified to meet the needs of the young people. For example, all staff in the home have completed the National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at level 3.

Staff receive regular supervision and feel supported and valued. This is reflected in an experienced stable staff group, with a supportive atmosphere and high staff morale. The roles and responsibilities of staff are clear. Rotas allow staff sufficient time to undertake individual work with young people, to attend regular team meetings and to complete necessary paperwork. Team meetings are used to look at practice issues and the needs of the young people; this ensures that all staff are aware of any issues relating to young people's behaviour and approach these issues in a consistent manner. As a result young people benefit from excellent support which meets their individual needs.

The manager has a development plan, which identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the home; the plan clearly targets areas for improvement with the development and further training of the staff being a main priority. This ensures that young people are cared for by staff who continually strive to improve their knowledge and understanding of their role.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Staff, young people and family contribute effectively to a young person's review and this ensures that any decisions are translated into the daily care plan and implemented consistently in practice. The review report provides up-to-date information, through discussion, as to how young people's individual needs or any concerns are met.

Young people's records are well structured and are held securely and confidentially. They cover all matters required in the regulations. Staff and management are well aware of the process and requirements to report significant events. Young people make excellent progress because of the effective management systems that are in place.

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.