

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gillian Walters
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to accommodate and care for five young males. Young people accommodated at the home experience emotional and behavioural difficulties, including learning difficulties within and outside the ASD spectrum. It is one of four homes owned by the company. It offers care to young people on a medium to long-term basis.

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**.

The home offers a good quality of care ensuring that planning is highly individualised in recognition of young people's needs. Staff have a clear understanding of young people's needs and assist them in reaching their full potential. This ensures that young people receive the appropriate levels of support they require to help them achieve good outcomes in their lives.

Young people are actively encouraged to contribute their ideas and make positive choices about their living environment and the care they receive. Consequently, young people feel settled in this home and fully involved in their care planning.

Young people share positive and trusting relationships with staff and appreciate the support they receive. Young people are unanimous in their view that they feel safe well protected by the staff that care for them. One young person commented, 'Staff are alright and will help you. The best thing is the trust staff give you.'

The home is effectively managed by a permanent Registered Manager who recognises that the key strength of the home is in working directly with young people to develop and expand their range of independence skills. This enables young people to be well prepared to successfully make the transition to adulthood and independent or supported living.

As a result of this inspection two recommendations for improvement are made; to

address improvements in recording of information and the range of activities young people can enjoy.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- encourage children to pursue individual interests and hobbies. This includes taking part in a range of activities, including leisure activities and trips. This relates specifically to encouraging young people to structure some activities into their free time (NMS 7.2)
- ensure entries in records are legible, clearly expressed and non-stigmatising. This relates specifically to the inappropriate use of the word 'absconding' in planning documentation. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people have settled well into this home having recently moved from other homes operated by the provider. Young people are aware that they are making good progress in their placements and that staff are supporting them in their achievements. For example, young people talk positively about how they have been encouraged to attend school and learn; compared to a time when they were not successfully engaged with education. One young person commented, 'It has been bad being away from my home area and family members, but I have gained in education and been able to make new friends.'

Young people have made good educational achievements in relation to their starting points. Placing authorities are positive about young people's educational progress. One social worker commented of the home, 'Staff are very proactive in supporting young people's education.'

Young people share positive relationships with staff and respond appropriately to an environment that affords them greater freedom and choice. Young people are encouraged to participate fully in their care planning and review processes. This ensures that they have a clear understanding of the future options available to them and to make informed choices.

Young people display good self-esteem and emotional resilience, knowing their views are respected and valued. A social worker commented of a young person placed, 'He speaks respectfully of the staff team, banter is good and he knows the boundaries.'

Young people are successfully maturing and gaining greater confidence in their

abilities. Young people are successfully learning a range of new skills that promote their independence. These include independent travel, budgeting, shopping, cooking, and self-care skills. Young people are encouraged to manage their free time positively which promotes their social development and readiness for adult life.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and have good access to a range of local services that promote their physical, emotional and psychological health. Young people benefit from the organisation's provision of a dedicated health care professional who oversees health care planning and arrangements for their routine and more specialist health care needs. This ensures that clear arrangements are in place to address their needs and the appropriate services identified to support them.

Young people enjoy positive contact with family and friends. They benefit from good opportunities to retain and develop those relationships that are most important to them.

Young people benefit from the home's location, close to the city centre, that enables them greater opportunity to access shops, places of interest and all local amenities. Young people enjoy their free time, socialising with peers in their community and developing new friendships.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and constructive relationships with their peers and staff in the home. They are confident in the knowledge that staff genuinely care for them and are available to support and guide them. One young person commented that 'there is always someone to talk to that can help sort things out for you.' Young people contribute to a harmonious living environment, showing respect and politeness to both staff and each other.

Young people have been actively involved in the practical side of designing the appearance of their home. They have contributed positively to negotiating boundaries, routines and arrangements within the home that enable them to feel safe and happy. This means that young people have a strong sense of belonging in the home and are confident that their views are appropriately taken into account and valued.

Young people are supported to understand their rights and what they should expect from living in the home. Young people know how to complain if they are unhappy but feel confident that they usually can resolve any issues through informal discussion and negotiation.

Young people benefit from extremely well planned, highly individualised care that effectively promotes their needs. An inclusive approach is followed to ensure that young people, and those most important to them, effectively contribute to planning. Young people's diverse needs in relation to their cultural background and personal

identity are well understood, identified and addressed in both daily living and care planning. This means that young people have a clear understanding of how their needs are to be met; the expectations of them and their carers; and the future achievements that they are working towards.

Young people enjoy the benefits of living in an environment that promotes their understanding and ability to enjoy a healthy lifestyle as they move towards independence. For example, young people are guided in developing their menus to ensure they offer good nutrition and provide a balanced diet. Staff actively support young people in arranging and attending routine health care appointments, such as, dental and optical care. Young people are encouraged to access local specialist services, as required, that promote emotional and psychological well-being. Young people enjoy good health and possess knowledge and a good understanding of how this can be maintained.

Staff are consistent in proactively supporting young people in their educational achievements. They work closely with the school attended by most young people that is also operated by the provider. Staff also have established good links with a local college attended by some of the young people and have successfully supported and negotiated young people's transition to further education.

Staff hold and share aspirations for young people's future employment opportunities and have been instrumental in facilitating work experience opportunities that will help them achieve their goals. Young people appreciate this support and as a result have clarity and are optimistic about how they will progress their education to maximise their opportunities.

Young people live in a home that is furnished and maintained to a high standard. It is comfortable and well designed and equipped to meet their needs. The location of the home is consistent in supporting young people to develop their independence. It is situated within easy walking distance of local centres for education, shops, all amenities and other places of interest. This enables young people to access all services without having to rely on staff and transport.

Some young people are engaging in occasional activities such as football and fishing. However, for the most, young people say that they enjoy spending free time in the city, 'hanging out' with friends. The availability of a wider range of activities and outings are limited which in turn limits the opportunities for young people to socialise, explore their community and have fun.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and protected. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection, ensuring that they have sufficient knowledge and skill to protect young people from abuse, bullying, neglect and sexual exploitation. They are familiar with the action required and support to be offered should any concerns or suspicions of

abuse arise.

Staff have not experienced any incidents of children going missing from this home. However, they are aware of local protocols and procedures to follow should such an event occur. Young people share a good understanding of the situations that can increase their vulnerability and in general behave appropriately to ensure their personal safety.

Young people benefit from an environment where positive behaviour is promoted and restraint is rarely used. Young people show maturity in understanding the reasons and occasions when this may occur but equally can reflect on the support available from staff to avoid such situations.

Young people are familiar with their individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans and have contributed successfully to these to assist staff in understanding the support they may require. On occasions young people do incur sanctions in response to less desirable behaviour. However, when used, these are fair, proportionate and reasonable. As a consequence, staff are able to effectively support young people, keeping them safe from harm.

Young people live in a home that is physically safe and appropriately secure. The home has robust arrangements in place to ensure safe recruitment and selection practice. Staff are thoroughly checked and vetted before starting work within the home. All visitors are checked on their arrival. They are required to provide suitable credentials, a reason for their visit and sign the visitors' book on entry. Together these measures ensure that young people are not made more vulnerable by being exposed to unsuitable adults who may do them harm.

Health and safety within the home is appropriately prioritised. Potential risks and the measures to reduce or eliminate those risks are suitably assessed and documented. All fire related equipment and appliances are regularly checked and maintained. Young people and staff participate in regular fire evacuations from the home to ensure they know what to do in the event of a real emergency. These measures ensure the environment remains a safe place for young people to live.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively managed by a permanent Registered Manager who demonstrates strong management skills and a good ability to lead her staff team. The Registered manager is well qualified and experienced and demonstrates a sound knowledge of the young people, their needs and how these are being addressed.

This is the home's first inspection following registration on 6 December 2012. At that time no requirements for improvement were made. The home has a good relationship with the local community and neighbours and as such has not received any complaints or concerns since opening.

The provider meets the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose and these are clearly understood by young people, staff and placing authorities. A young people's guide is available and young people have participated in the making of a short film that demonstrates what the home has to offer. These resources ensure that young people have sufficient understanding of the services and facilities provided by the home and the organisation in advance of placement.

The home is adequately resourced. Young people are supported by two consistent staff teams that possess a diverse range of skills and experience relevant to working with children and young people. All staff have, or are working towards, an appropriate level 3 qualification in working with children and young people.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive training programme that ensures they are up to date with recent legislation and good practice. The home promotes continuous learning using additional opportunities, such as team meetings and individual supervision sessions, to explore and support staff development. The home has suitable arrangements in place for annual appraisal, ensuring that there is a regular opportunity to reflect on staff performance, their individual strengths and plan for their further development and progression.

The Registered Manager has completed and provided Ofsted with a review of her regular quality assurance monitoring activity which evaluates practice and activity within the home during the first three months of operation.

The provider has good arrangements in place to ensure that regular external monitoring of the home is robust and challenging. Consequently, the home is able to demonstrate an understanding of its strengths and can successfully identify areas for improvement. Such improvements are documented in the home's development plan with realistic timescales for action.

The home has a robust system in place for notifying Ofsted and other relevant bodies of significant events that occur within the home or with young people's lives. This ensures that those with significant interest in the young people's welfare are kept appropriately informed of any such events.

Young people's individual records are highly organised and maintained ensuring easy access to all documentation relating to their placement, progress and achievements. However, it was noted in some documentation that the term 'absconding' was being used as a reference to their behaviour should young people go missing from home. This is viewed as an inappropriate use of language, given that young people are not subject to any legal order or living in a secure environment. Young people's records are stored securely within the home maintaining young people's rights to privacy and confidentiality.

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.