

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is operated by a private national service provider and is registered to care for up to three 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 children's home is very child centred and nurturing. It is managed by a highly motivated manager who leads a team of staff who are enthusiastic and caring. This service is particularly good at supporting older young people as they begin to move towards adulthood and prepare for transition, both in education and in their living arrangements.

Young people feel safe and secure in their placement. One young person commented; 'I feel safe here, I can talk to anyone and I like living here and all the staff try their best to help me.' All young people speak very well of staff and they benefit from excellent relationships that have been established. Communication between staff and young people is excellent. Staff really listen to young people and help them to make sense of their feelings and responses. Care planning is personalised and effective, taking account of both short- and long-term goals.

Behaviour is well managed. Staff are positive and engage well with young people and young people know how staff expect them to behave. Young people benefit from the knowledge that staff have high expectations of them and are consistent in their care.

The Registered Manager has very recently returned from maternity leave. During her period of leave the home was managed by a senior member of the team who has since returned to his substantive post within the home; therefore providing excellent deputising arrangements. Also within recent months the home has experienced other changes, including an increase in registered numbers from two to three young people and the acquisition of the home by Advanced Childcare Limited. The manager feels that the staff have adjusted well to an increase in young people and feels that

the new company has presented new and better opportunities, for example improvements in the range and level of training opportunities available to all staff. However, there are shortfalls in respect of the new Statement of Purpose; Regulation 33 and Regulation 34 reports which currently do not adequately evidence appropriate consultation and the impact of this on the development of the service; and some parts of the physical environment and grounds.

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)	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement, in these regulations referred to as 'the statement of purpose' which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1. In particular ensure this document accurately reflects this service (Regulation 4 (1))	31/05/2013
33 (2001)	interview, with their consent and in private, such of the young people accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	31/05/2013
34 (2001)	ensure the review of quality of care and the report supplied, shall provide for consultation with young people accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	31/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home is well maintained and decorated, in particular attention given to upgrading young people's bathroom and kitchen and in making improvements to the extensive garden. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Overall, young people are achieving exceptionally good outcomes from their placement at this home. Young people enjoy living there and recognise the progress they have made. Staff are very positive and nurturing in their care of young people and this has enabled young people to grow in confidence and in their emotional resilience. Staff are highly aspirational for young people and they in turn have their own aspirations which they are working diligently towards.

Young people benefit from the excellent relationships that they have with the manager and staff. There is a mutual respect between staff and young people along with an open and positive dialogue. Young people are engaged in positive activities. They enjoy spending time with family and friends in the community and use community facilities such as public transport, shopping centres and parks. Young people benefit from living within their own community and maintaining contact family, friends and community life.

Young people are achieving good outcomes in education. A very individual approach is taken which ensures that their diverse needs are addressed. For example young people are pursuing both GCSEs and alternative qualifications that will enable them to embark on the next stage in their chosen career path. This approach demonstrates that these young people are accessing a range of opportunities equal to their peers.

Health care support is comprehensive and individualised. Young people attend regular routine and specialist health checks that address their physical, mental and emotional health needs. Young people also benefit from being encouraged to eat healthily and enjoy regular exercise. As young people become older they are encouraged to take responsibility for some aspects of their own health and wellbeing. For example, some young people smoke and staff have ensured that they have access to the full range of services that will inform them of the associated health risks as well as getting assistance to quit. While there has been a reduction of behaviour that is unsafe, such as missing from care, incidents are still occurring and while staff are working diligently with other professionals to reduce incidents further, these occurrences do impact on the overall outcomes for young people.

Effective preparation for a successful transition to independence and their next stage in life, be it in education or in living arrangements, is a particular strength of this service. Staff work incredibly positively with young people and their nurturing approach enables young people to develop their confidence and skills in a very safe and secure way. A very individual approach is taken, related to the age, maturity, past experience and personal aspirations of the young person. Young people are given incentives and are also rewarded with an abundance of praise, which achieves excellent outcomes.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive good quality care and support. Staffing levels are adequate

and staff are highly motivated and caring. Without exception staff are aspirational for young people and are committed to ensuring their placement at this home makes a positive difference in their lives. To help achieve such outcomes staff acknowledge the importance of working proactively and positively with other agencies, professionals and families.

Staff ensure that young people have detailed individualised care plans. There is a very child-centred, holistic and comprehensive approach to care planning that ensures young people have their say. Plans are regularly reviewed and are agreed by young people.

Young people know that staff are interested in them and want them to do well. They feel listened to and are confident their views are taken into account, both in respect of planning for the future, but also in the day-to-day running of the home. Young people are given every encouragement to attend important meetings, including being given the emotional support and skills needed to conduct themselves properly in what is potentially a threatening situation. Young people benefit from staff supporting them and responding to them in a really positive way. For example young people may have a meal out as a treat for attending a meeting and doing so well and this also provides an opportunity for young people to discuss and reflect as well as plan further ahead. Indeed, effective communication between staff and young people is a particular strength of this service.

There is an established complaints procedure in place and young people know how to complain and have confidence in the complaints process. Recent complaints made by young people (there have been two since the last inspection) were handled positively and swiftly, with the young person being kept fully informed of the process and outcome.

Staff are particularly skilled in deploying techniques to help young people develop better behaviour and manage their emotional responses to stressful events. Sometimes when young people are upset, for example, following a telephone call or unexpected change in arrangements with their family, staff give young people time and space, while giving constant reassurance that they are around to help when needed. In addition, over time staff have helped young people to develop their own coping strategies, which are very individualised to their needs. For example this may include recognising low sugars and having something to eat or drink or by taking time out in their own bedroom and playing favourite music as a means of calming down before they are ready to discuss something and seek resolution.

The home provides a comfortable and homely environment. Bedrooms are highly personalised by young people and they have recently been involved in decorating the lounge. However, there are other parts of the home that would also benefit from further redecorating and refurbishment including the bathroom and kitchen. The home benefits from a large garden, but this is rather overgrown and while providing an abundance of outdoor space that young people could really enjoy, it is not particularly designed or equipped to encourage its full use. The home is rurally located and young people have access to up to two cars and are given funds to use

public transport.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff team work effectively together to keep young people safe. Young people report that they feel safe and understand the concerns staff have when they behave in a way that is not felt to be safe. This insight benefits young people and is helping them to make better decisions. When young people make inappropriate decisions, staff pull together to support the young person to learn from it, as well as working alongside other professionals.

Staff have a very good recognition of the vulnerabilities and diverse needs of individual young people. They know the young people very well and their approach is responsive to addressing their diverse needs. Safeguarding young people is a priority and all staff receive training so they know what to do and who to contact in the event of a child protection issue.

Risk taking and unacceptable behaviour is reducing and where concerns remain, for example in missing from care incidents, staff are working proactively with relevant agencies, to reduce these completely. Consultation with a placing social worker confirmed the home communicates and works well with them and that considering individual starting points, improvements in keeping young people safe have been achieved. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the triggers associated with individual young people going missing and pursue follow up action with young people to look at strategies to reduce such incidents. For example, this includes a recognition that as young people get older and develop meaningful relationships, they inevitably want to spend more time away from the home. To support young people staff are proactive in establishing and developing protocols that their placing authority to support young people in their choices while also ensuring they stay safe, partly by developing more responsibility for their own personal safety and well-being.

Care plans and risk assessments identify triggers that may lead to challenging behaviour and detail action to support positive responses. Clear boundaries and expectations support young people to behave well. The use of sanctions is fair and reasonable and 'natural consequences' are used. This allows young people to make sense of the consequences and think about their behaviour. There is minimum use of physical restraint, which is used for the minimum period and with minimum force and only as a 'last resort'.

Young people are protected by vetting of visitors to the home and a visitors' book is maintained. The recruitment of staff is robust. The manager is involved in the recruitment and selection of staff. Original recruitment records are maintained in the organisation's central office and a summary is kept in the home.

The environment is physically safe and secure. The new company has local contract in place to maintain, repair and respond to emergencies. There are regular health

and safety checks along with servicing of equipment to protect young people. A fire risk assessment is also in place and a fire detection system. Young people and staff regularly practise evacuations so that they know what to do in an emergency, although fire records do not include participants' names, which is useful as a means of ensuring everyone is equally practiced and knowledgeable.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a dynamic and competent manager. There is a real sense that this home strives to constantly improve to which its recently produced development plans bears witness. It is also a very child-centred home and young people benefit from the positive and nurturing approach staff have.

Since the recent change of ownership, staff have been absorbing and implementing a number of changes. It is felt that there are several improvements. For example some changes to documentation are felt to be better and staff training is felt to offer more opportunities and includes a third tier of training for managers. Additional resources are also being made available to make cosmetic improvements to the environment but also hopefully more significant improvements to the fabric of the building. However, a significant shortfall is in the quality the Statement of Purpose, which for example, although lengthy does not include all matters detailed in Schedule 1, is difficult to read and is misleading and does not properly reflect the individuality of this home.

The staffing levels of the home meets the needs of current young people. Flexibility is provided as the home is one of three in a small geographical area that operates a reciprocal support arrangement. Young people know each other and staff well and by utilising staff when necessary from one of these homes, young people receive a good consistency of staff care and are not exposed to being supported by staff whom they do not know and who do not know their needs. There is good staff retention and currently just one vacancy. An appointment has been made but the member of staff is not due to start until all checks have been received and they have completed a ten day induction programme. Staff are up-to-date with their mandatory training and speak well of the training opportunities available to them. With the exception of one member of staff who is still on a six month probationary period, all have either have at least an NVQ 3 or equivalent child care qualification or are currently completing the course. Without exception staff speak very well of the management of the home and feel they benefit from regular staff meetings, supervision and appraisal.

While quality monitoring processes, including Regulation 33 visits and Regulation 34 review of quality, are thorough and contribute along with the development plan to improvements, neither of these reports adequately or consistently evidence that appropriate consultation has taken place with young people, staff, parents and placing authorities. Neither do the reports demonstrate how the outcome of such consultation has helped form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the

home and how it can be further improved.

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.