

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Linda Leeder
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home provides care and accommodation for three young people with 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**.

Young people benefit from excellent care provided by a staff team that places young people's well-being at the heart of their practice. Young people make positive progress in their educational, independence and social skills. They access a wide range of activities and supportive staff encourage participation and inclusion in the wider community wherever possible. Young people make gradual progress in terms of their self-confidence, emotional development and behaviour during their time in the home. This is because of their individual needs being clearly identified and well met.

There are effective systems in place that promote the young people's safety. They have robust risk assessments and behavioural management plans that assist staff to keep young people safe. Risk taking and damaging behaviours have reduced as a result of placement in the home. Young people feel safe and secure. They value the bully-free environment. The supportive culture ensures that young people are confident to express their individuality.

Staff have effective relationships with young people. They are knowledgeable and follow robust care plans that reflect the current needs of young people. Social workers report that the communication between staff and young people is excellent; they resolve issues quickly and competently and support young people to understand boundaries. This ensures that young people feel secure and less anxious. Since living at the home young people have developed an understanding of how to regulate their behaviour and have dramatically reduced the times when they are missing from home.

The home is competently and effectively managed. Staff receive good support from the Registered Manager that enhances their performance and improves practice. Although the service generally provides good quality training for staff, a more robust and focussed response is needed with regard to training in child protection, young people who go missing from home and sexual exploitation. Although monitoring is carried out in line with regulations, however patterns and trends are not always evaluated to ensure that the home continues to meet the needs of young people. However this has minimal impact on the care of young people at present.

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
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training specifically in relation to child protection, children who are missing from home and sexual exploitation. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/03/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people thrive and develop because they live in a nurturing environment. Young people are encouraged to express their individuality. They develop improved self-awareness because they receive staff support to explore their backgrounds and experiences of growing up. Young people say that staff 'are always there for them even when they mess up'. Young people receive sensitive responses to their complex emotional needs. They also respect the clear boundaries for behaviour and enjoy the praise they receive for their efforts and achievements. As a result young people forge good foundations in emotional resilience and make meaningful relationships.

Young people regularly attend educational provisions and make continuous progress from their starting points. Young people who have completed statutory education attend college or continue at school. Some young people study for vocational qualifications, which support future opportunities in employment, others are working towards attending university. Engagement in statutory and further education enables young people to have greater choice in employment and further learning when they move onto adulthood.

Young people lead active, healthy lives. They learn good self-care skills during their time at the home and attend all routine health appointments. They do occasionally participate in risky and unhealthy activities such as going missing from the home and smoking, but these are reducing in frequency and duration. Young people develop coping strategies and make positive and healthy choices that increase maturity and self esteem. This means they take fewer risks and young people are very proud of their achievements over recent months.

Young people are fully able to participate in a wide range of activities and staff are very focused in enabling them to be able to experience the same activities as their peers. For example, young people attend the cinema, play golf and attend drama clubs. They are also supportive of their community and have volunteered to help at their local fire station at a charity event. This, linked with the work in promoting and enabling the young people to make informed choices, develops their self esteem and positive self view.

Young people maintain and develop positive contact with those who are significant to them and regularly have phone calls with friends and family. Staff communicate well with social workers and parents ensuring contact arrangements are regularly reviewed. Visits by young people with family members are well managed and supported by staff.

Young people are prepared for living independently. The programme provided for each young person is tailored to their individual needs and is successful. The independence programme provides support in practical ways such as how to do washing and change a light bulb and also helps to ensure that young people can manage emotionally by providing ways of finding support locally for concerns that they may have. This increases young people's self-esteem and develops their maturity and confidence.

Quality of care

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

The quality of care provided is of an exceptionally high standard. Staff have a very good understanding of the individual tastes, preferences, and wishes of the young people. Because staff are consistently attentive to individual needs, young people feel that they are well looked after and well cared for. Young people say that staff 'go out of their way to do the best for you, they are fair and just'. Staff interact with young people in an open, warm, and affectionate manner. Because staff are good at

using humour to promote positive behaviour, there is a lively, happy atmosphere in the home. The home is a nurturing and supportive environment where young people thrive.

All young people have a comprehensive person-centred care plan that meets their individual needs. Young people's views are included in their care plans, which are used to promote improvements in specific areas of their development. The plans identify achievable goals; for example, improving personal care and managing money. Staff review the plans regularly at key worker sessions, in partnership with young people. This supports young people to be actively involved in their care.

Staff consistently encourage young people to reflect on how negative behaviours can hurt others. This practice proves effective as young people subsequently show improved ability to deal with conflict appropriately. Although police have been called to the home on several occasions when young people were settling into the home and difficult behaviours escalated this has now considerably reduced. Thorough and comprehensive behaviour plans have succeeded in promoting good positive relationships between young people. Young people receive a calm, practical and safe response to complex emotional challenges and occasional risk taking behaviours.

Young people say they know how to make complaints and feel able to do so. The Registered Manager investigates concerns in line with the home's complaints procedures. Furthermore, young people have access to independent visitors and contact numbers for Childline and Ofsted. They can utilise these contacts if they wish to complain to external organisations not associated with the home. This practice empowers young people to make complaints if they are unhappy.

The home is excellent at promoting college and school attendance. Because staff have a very good knowledge of the young people, they are able to motivate them and provide tailored incentives for attendance. Young people are supported to establish settled routines and these routines ensure that young people begin the day in a positive frame of mind. One young person said that he now goes to college on a regular basis because of support from staff. Educational achievement is promoted because the home has very good links with education providers.

Staff are proactive in identifying resources and opportunities for young people. They give full support for young people to attend and try new leisure opportunities. The enthusiasm and pride of staff clearly impacts on young people as they develop good self-esteem and become increasingly confident. Young people enjoy shopping, trips to the local golfing range, playing music and attending regular football sessions. Social workers say the home, 'provides activities that are enjoyable but also helps increase their confidence, resilience and self esteem'. The good quality activity programme ensures that young people use their time constructively and have positive memories of key milestones in their lives. This enables young people to reflect positively on their time in the home when they leave.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe from harm with high levels of supervision. Young people are safe in the home and feel safe. This service has a good impact on the safety of young people because safeguarding strategies focus on extensive and thorough risk assessment. In addition, safe recruitment procedures are in place to safeguard young people. Settings that ensure employees are appropriately vetted show commitment to the safety of young people.

Staff have a zero tolerance approach to bullying and use restorative approaches to resolve issues. Staff also use a restorative approach to ensuring that young people understand the consequences of their actions in relation to issues with their behaviour. The staff are aware of the triggers for some aspects of young people's behaviour. Efficient staff and effective plans support young people to break long-term negative cycles of behaviour. This includes a reduction in young people going missing and criminal behaviour. The staff team address challenging behaviour and complex needs by rewarding and promoting good behaviour. Staff seldom use physical intervention and mainly manage challenging behaviour with deflection and talking techniques. On rare occasions when restrictive behaviour techniques are used, these are appropriate. Recording of these measures is robust and meets the required regulations.

Young people report that despite showing extreme challenging behaviours to staff at times, the staff team have clear boundaries and remain very positive towards them. Young people say this is because the 'staff act as adults by saying what they mean and keeping to it but listening and understanding what is going on for me' and, 'staff treat us with respect, they want us to manage our feelings better as this will help us in the future.' Feedback from young people and social workers highlights good boundary setting and de-escalation techniques. As a result, young people learn how to reduce any risks to themselves in the community and they can behave with politeness and consideration. Since arriving at the home risk-taking behaviour of the young people is reducing.

Regular safety checks and fire drills take place to ensure a safe environment for young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is competently managed by an experienced and effective Registered Manager. This is the first inspection since registration. Young people are cared for by an enthusiastic, highly motivated and dynamic staff team who are experienced and caring. They are well supported by each other and the Registered Manager. Staff said that they love working in the home with the young people. There is a stable staff team who clearly have the interests of the young people at heart.

Staffing levels are good and provide children with sufficient competent adults to care

for them and fulfil a positive parenting role. The staff team is diverse: people have a range of life experiences and qualifications and staff have a good level of support and supervision.

There have been some episodes of risk taking behaviour from young people. Although these incidents are reducing and there has been some training in regards to child protection, young people who go missing from home and sexual exploitation, this has not been robust or specifically focussed in order to continue to meet the needs of young people in the home. Managers at this provision consider staff training important. They provide regular training to support the on-going development of the experienced staff team. This promotes the professional care provision for young people.

The home is very good at responding to complaints. The complaint procedure is used very positively by the manager to ensure the views of young people, their families, and other stakeholders are acknowledged and respected. In addition, views from young people are sought on a regular basis. This helps young people to formulate their own feelings and views, increases confidence and encourages positive discussion. Staff are effective at ensuring that young people know about their rights.

Young people's records are organised well and contribute to an understanding of their lives and experiences. Staff are encouraged to reflect on the quality of care they provide and to evaluate future interventions. Parents and professionals comment that good quality and well-written reports provide them with an in-depth understanding of their young people and highlight positive and negative events in their lives. All records are securely stored. Information relating to significant events affecting young people's safety is notified to relevant agencies, this includes Ofsted and the safeguarding teams from the local and home authority. This ensures concerns about young people's safety are shared by the home to help protect individuals from abuse.

The Registered Manager is committed to making continued improvements to this good service. Views of young people and others are regularly sought to inform practice developments. Although a development plan is in place and internal and external monitoring of practice takes place each month these are not robust and do not always take account of the patterns and trends of incidents within the home, or the impact that this has on the care provided to young people. This does not adversely affect the quality of care provided for young people at present.

Staff receive regular supervision and have said that the sessions are challenging of their practice, productive and supportive. Regular staff meetings provide a forum for staff to share best practice and develop strategies to meet the needs of the young people.

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.