

Inspection report for children's home

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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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The service provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is privately owned alongside two other services and run on therapeutic principles. One of the other services provides semi-independent facilities for young people preparing to leave care. The service houses a specific facility of education in an independent school linked to the house.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

The home provides exceptionally well-planned, personalised care that has resulted in young people who thrive in settled long-term placements. The young people at the service are highly empowered and their views are central to decisions made about the house and their care. One of the key strengths is the diverse and balanced team and the strong implementation of the organisational aims. The quality of the relationships between staff and young people are extremely good. The service promotes a safe and nurturing home where young people progress well in all areas of their lives. The service has a clear plan of improvement and has upgraded the house and gardens some of which are not yet fully complete.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the maintenance and design of the home continues to be improved and updated with particular reference to the front garden and entrance to the house. (NMS 10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **outstanding**.

Young people have developed high emotional resilience and good understanding about their unique family backgrounds. They talk openly about their families and contact arrangements. Young people are able to welcome family members to the home and know that their families are genuinely valued. Comments from young people include that the only thing wrong with the home is that their family do not

live there but it is great.

Bedrooms are highly personalised and reflect each person's individuality. Walls are decorated and painted by young people who choose soft furnishings to make their rooms their own private space that reflects their identity and culture. Pictures, photos and art work make rooms unique and diverse. Young people are encouraged to explore and discover who they are through art and find alternative ways of communicating their feelings. This has resulted in a home where therapeutic interventions work well and young people are settled, relaxed and empowered.

Young people attend education provided on site. Their attendance is extremely good and they develop many practical and domestic skills through their placements. For example, young people cook and prepare healthy food for lunch. They help with maintenance, decorating and garden work. Young people use the local village amenities and this promotes a strong sense of local community. This includes hiring venues for celebrations and cooking for older members of the community. Young people have also learned how to be neighbourly and ensure that routines in the home are not disturbing those in close proximity. These experiences have truly enhanced young people's understanding and tolerance of others and have built positive self-esteem.

Young people's health needs are given the highest priority. They are given information and support about healthy lifestyles and strongly encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Young people choose their snack options and know that they have to be healthy. Fresh fruit is always out in a bowl; this is varied and looks appetising. Drinks are consistently encouraged and young people with coughs and colds are given homely remedies in accordance with their placement plans.

Quality of care

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

Staff and young people have formed trusting relationships based on mutual respect, common interests and humour. This promotes a fun and positive environment. Young people are given excellent support in areas of their lives that the home is responsible for. Their views are highly valued by staff and utilised in the overall running of the house. Monthly meetings are held with young people, however, young people also interact with staff throughout the day. They visit the office and talk to the manager regularly and are encouraged to offer their opinions and ideas. The complaints procedure is very well advertised and understood and has been used by young people. Staff help young people use advocacy services and contract children's rights services to ensure their views are heard. Overall, staff strongly encourage young people to put their views forward and utilise specific advocacy services. Social workers spoken to during the inspection describe staff as having a 'flexible and strength based approach' and going 'above and beyond' what is required to support each young person.

Staff provide sensitive intervention; excellent one-to-one support and have an in-

depth understanding of young people's core issues. They provide firm boundaries that young people have learnt to expect. These are challenged on occasions and staff are adept in their gentle, clear approach. The maintenance of healthy evening routines are conducive to attendance and achievement in school. Staff are highly persistent in the promotion of education and some young people have made significant educational achievements while living at the home. This on-site facility requires the full support of staff to ensure that young people who struggle with school work are supported in ways that are helpful and consistent with academic staff. Young people were observed at the start of a new term after a long holiday. During this time some found the adjustment difficult. However, staff gave a very clear message that attendance is compulsory and young people settled back into the school routine.

Staff provide concise care plans that give a very good insight into the unique characteristic of each young person. Specific likes and dislikes are recorded and clearly implemented in practice. This includes use of pet names, favourite foods and décor around the house. Staff facilitate activities that young people like, including sport, walks, outdoor activities and trips to the cinema. Young people appear animated, contented and relaxed clearly enjoying staff company. Feedback from young people concludes that staff could not do any better than they are doing already.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they feel exceptionally safe and secure at the home. There are very clear procedures that have been developed with other local services, such as children's services and the local police. This means that, when young people go missing, staff know exactly what to do and what the police will do. Young people are strongly encouraged to take responsibility for their own safety. Innovative ideas have empowered young people to do this. For example, young people have drawn up 'walking out plans', detailing where they will be found, the safety of the chosen place and what staff are to do in when this happens. This means that young people needing to leave quickly to take time out from heated situations are doing so safely and with agreement from staff. This empowers young people and helps diffuse and de-escalate situations. Physical restraint has been used only to keep young people safe. All recent restraints were reflected and reported upon very well. Feedback from young people and social workers highlights staff skills at de-escalation techniques. Most young people have never been restrained as they are encouraged to manage their feelings using one-to-one support from staff. The emotional well-being of young people is central to all practice. Staff have high aspirations and expectations; they are positive and firm with young people. Consequently, young people know what to expect and behave with politeness and consideration. Positive encouragement is always given and special acknowledgments celebrated with colourful start charts resulting in eventual rewards.

The staff understand the child protection policy and know how to implement this in order to protect young people from potential harm or act following an allegation or disclosure. Staff attend professionals meetings and core groups to review care arrangements. Outside professionals comment on staff's flexible and helpful approach to the logistics of meetings and how young people are supported throughout. Staff have been selected with the utmost care and all the required safety checks. Agency staff are not used, although some staff are deployed from the other service owned by the organisation. These staff are known by young people and are highly familiar with routines and support. This means that young people continue to receive excellent continuity of care and this helps to promote a stable and calm environment.

The house is extremely safe and secure. Fire prevention activities are planned and carried out with regularity and care. For example, all equipment is tested regularly and new young people are familiarised with the emergency evacuation procedure. All other health and safety checks are comprehensive and ensure the environment is physically safe.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed with optimum efficiency and skill by the Registered Manager. This is overseen by the directors of the organisation who have taken time and trouble to ensure that the right calibre of staff are appointed. The long serving team reflects diversity in age, gender, race and experience providing strong role models for young people. The management team consistently communicates high expectations to staff. This has resulted in a professional and balanced team that reflects extremely well on their practice and support one another. Consequently, during challenging times the moral and support within the team keeps the team buoyant and reflective.

The home is monitored very carefully by both the manager and independent visitor. This has been rigorous and has enabled the home to sustain its outstanding status throughout changes to the legislative framework. The revised national minimum standards and supporting documentation has been fully implemented and understood by staff. The child-focussed standards reflect the ethos of the service and their highly individualised holistic approach. The aims and objectives of the service are simple and based on positive respect and nurture of all their young people. These translate very well into all areas of practice.

An ongoing development plan outlines ambitious projects undertaken since the last inspection including major building work. There are new plans afoot to make further improvements and ensure that the house is light, spacious and homely. There has been landscaping work undertaken in the front garden. However, this work is not complete and, as a result, the front garden and front of the house are in need of attention.

The storage of records and confidentiality is always adhered to. Thought has been given to the office layout to ensure sensitivity to young people visiting the office in regard to the storage of their files. All events that require notification are done so in a timely manner in accordance with regulations.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.