

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Louisa Bayley
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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.

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 in this home make good progress educationally, socially, emotionally and psychologically, as a direct result of the high quality care they receive. A parent said of the home: 'They have done more for her than any other home. Her behaviour is better; there are less incidents at home. They do everything they can to keep her safe.' Young people are positive about the home, and their relationships with the staff team.

Young people benefit from highly personalised care planning, which promotes their individual needs, wishes and preferences. The competent staff team address highly challenging behaviour and complex needs to support development and progress. As a result, offending and risk-taking behaviour is reducing. The care staff work cohesively with the teaching staff. Consequently, education is successfully promoted and supported, leading to increasing attendance and engagement.

Staff effectively apply firm boundaries and consistency in their approaches. Young people say that unsafe situations are managed well by staff. A social worker said: 'The home do everything they can to keep young people safe.'

The leadership and management of the home are robust. The manager is highly effective and consistently strives for improvement. She continually monitors and evaluates systems, processes, approaches and performance to identify strengths and weaknesses. Where weaknesses are identified, she takes remedial action to secure

future improvement.

There is currently no protocol in place with the police in regard of young people going missing. This does not detract from the efficient way staff manage incidents of missing from care, or compromise young people’s safety in any way. The manager ensures that all notifiable events are thoroughly explored and addressed promptly. However there is, on occasion, a delay between the event and the notification being sent to Ofsted. Again, this does not impact on well-being or safety of young people. There are good systems in place for medication storage and stock control. However, there have been occasions when staff have not administered prescribed medication to young people.

An area identified for improvement is the décor of the home.

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
16 (2001)	implement a procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in a children's home is absent without permission which has regard to any relevant local authority or police protocols on missing children, with specific regard to a protocol with the police (Regulation 16 (4)(b))	09/08/2012
21 (2001)	ensure that any medicine which is prescribed for a child is administered as prescribed, and a written record is kept of the administration of any medicine to any child (Regulation 21 (2) (b)(c))	09/08/2012
30 (2001)	ensure that any events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 are notified without delay to the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 of the table. (Regulation 30 (1))	09/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- provide a comfortable and homely environment that is well maintained and decorated, with specific reference to carpets and painting and decorating. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make significant progress in understanding their backgrounds and the impact that past events have had on them. Regular, high quality, individual work with staff and therapists gives young people the opportunity for discussion and reflection. As a result, they are able to develop their emotional resilience and develop strategies to manage self-harming behaviours. A parent said: 'I am impressed with the home. They have given more help and support mentally than any other place.'

Staff support young people to understand the importance of healthy lifestyles and take responsibility for their own health. Smoking cessation is promoted and key work sessions address issues affecting health. An example of good practice is the nurture time delivered by the home. This is a programme which explores conception, child birth and raising a family. Activities such as using a prosthetic pregnancy bump and responding to the demands of a simulated baby are used. This helps to raise awareness of the responsibilities upon mothers to be. Young people fully engaged in, completed and enjoyed the programme. As a result, some young people have changed their views about wanting to have a baby when they are sixteen years old.

Young people are making good progress educationally. A social worker said: 'educationally, she was not engaging at all before she was admitted to the home and now she is engaged and has good attendance.' Staff use young people's individual interests and strengths to develop a personalised curriculum that suits their needs. Young people engage in work experience placements within their specific interests. These are highly successful and promote development of their skill base, in addition to social interaction and responsibility. Young people who have completed statutory education have full programmes in place to ensure meaningful educational engagement every day. Additionally, young people are positively involved in community activities, such as cadets. As a result, they are able to pursue their interests and form social networks outside of the home.

Young people whose behaviour is unsafe benefit from highly individualised work to understand and address the antecedents of their behaviour. Staff ensure that safeguards are in place but also support individuals to develop a sense of responsibility for their actions. This has led to a reduction in offending and unsafe behaviour.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. They have two key work sessions per week and a weekly review. This individual time helps to promote relationships and gives young people the opportunity to express their feelings, wishes and aspirations. Weekly reviews include an overview of the week and look at

how any potential difficulties in the coming week can be supported. Key workers discuss targets and incentives with young people. They also help them to reflect on incidents, physical intervention and sanctions and explore the young person's responses and feelings. Consequently, young people feel listened to and valued.

Staff use circle time each day, starting the day with a discussion. Topics are wide ranging and include one session per week on moral, ethical and religious issues. This stimulates debate on issues that affect young people themselves and also promotes understanding of the diverse issues that affect other people. Individual care plans address young people's cultural and religious requirements and also look at personal identity.

Staff support young people's health needs, ensuring they access the services they need. There are weekly opportunities for young people to participate in therapeutic sessions with a psychologist. Staff acknowledge that this is a big step for young people. They encourage individuals to attend and accompany them into sessions when requested. Young people then progress to being able to attend sessions without needing staff. Sessions are young person led and strategies to manage a range of behaviours and feelings are discussed and agreed. Staff in the home provide continuity by supporting young people to use the strategies they have been given.

There is an effective system in place for the storage and stock control of medication. Staff receive training in the administration of medication and the manager uses regular tests to ensure that staff knowledge is up-to-date. There have, however, been occasions when staff have not administered prescribed medication.

Young people are fully aware of how to make a complaint. Residents' meetings are used to discuss issues within the home and give young people the opportunity to make their views known. Open and honest discussion is a feature of the home and young people are confident in raising any issues they have, with the staff team or the manager.

Staff are extremely proactive in supporting the educational achievement of young people. They work seamlessly with the teaching staff on-site, support lessons and take young people to and from their work experience placements. As a result of working closely with teaching staff, care staff are aware of young people's academic abilities and targets. This joint working contributes to improving attendance in education and promoting engagement.

Young people are effectively supported to maintain and develop contact with those who are significant to them. Staff communicate well with parents and carers and welcome visits to the home. The communication with social workers is effective, ensuring that contact arrangements are in place and regularly reviewed.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe in this home. There are no reported incidents of bullying and young people confirm this is not an issue for them. Staff are proactive in ensuring that young people are kept safe. Risk assessments are thorough and regularly reviewed. Each young person has a behaviour support plan and a positive handling plan. Strategies to manage behaviour are individualised and staff are consistent in their approaches. As a result, young people are protected from abuse and exploitation. A social worker said: 'The staff team are very consistent. She (young person) has never had stability or felt contained and the home achieves that for her.'

Levels of supervision minimise the frequency with which young people go missing. On the occasions it does occur, organisational procedures are followed and comprehensive records made. The number of occasions young people go missing is reducing over time. The manager has been proactive in pursuing a protocol with the local police. To date, this has been unsuccessful and continues to be pursued.

Positive behaviour is promoted through the extensive individual work that takes place with young people. There is an ethos of exploring antecedents, behaviour and consequences and working with young people to help them make positive choices. Restraint is used only as a last resort and in response to young people endangering themselves or others. Young people say: 'Staff restrain us if we are putting ourselves at risk. They only do it if they have to, to keep us safe. They do not hurt us.' All incidents of restraint are recorded comprehensively. Reflection on incidents takes place with young people and also forms part of the weekly review for individuals. The manager has recently implemented a staff review of physical restraints. This is a very positive approach to understanding why physical restraint has taken place, discussing future approaches and determining any staff training needs.

Young people identify staff they can talk to in the home, if they have a concern. They also talk about the independent listener who visits the home. Young people say they get on well with him and talk to him regularly. He takes them out of the home, giving ample time, space and opportunity to raise issues in a neutral environment.

Staff are vetted and checked prior to taking up employment and appropriate records are kept in the home.

Leadership and management

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

A competent, experienced manager effectively and efficiently leads the home. There have been no concerns or complaints since the previous inspection.

The home demonstrates continuing improvement. The manager is extremely proactive in monitoring and evaluating systems, process and approaches. She has a comprehensive development plan in place, identifying areas for improvement. The development plan is reviewed on a weekly basis, and is adapted as the need arises.

There is a programme of on-going home improvements. The home is clean and tidy and a previous recommendation, to improve the front garden, has been addressed. This has resulted in a much more attractive space. However, there are parts of the home that are not well decorated or maintained.

The independent visitor completes monthly reports on the quality of care. Monthly monitoring by the manager is comprehensive. Where anomalies are identified, she immediately responds by taking remedial action. She monitors and analyses sanctions, restraints, incidents and missing from home and uses the information to identify patterns and trends. This information is used as a basis to make changes which will lead to improvements in outcomes for young people. An internal review meeting has been recently introduced. This takes place every six weeks, with the manager, head of education, lead key worker and a care director. The objective of the meetings is to thoroughly explore the outcomes for young people. They look at all aspects of the young person's progress and a priority point is raised. Action is then taken to address the priority, following the meeting. This means that staff are clear on the positive outcomes and can determine areas of focus. As a result, young people benefit from positive outcomes being promoted across all areas of their development.

Placing authorities are clear about the purpose of the home and social workers say that it meets its aims and objectives. A young person, when asked if the home was what they had expected, said: 'yes, it does what it says on the tin.'

Significant events are responded to promptly. Young people's safety is the manager's priority and she ensures that all necessary action is taken to address situations that arise. However there is, on occasions, a delay between the occurrence of a significant event and the notification being sent to Ofsted.

Staff say they receive regular and supportive supervision. They have annual appraisals that identify any training needs and also serve to reinforce and acknowledge good performance. Responsibilities are delegated across the staff team, helping to make workloads manageable. Staff are supported to develop professionally and have opportunities to undertake qualifications to help them progress.

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.