

Inspection report for children's home

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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered for up to five young people and is owned and managed by a private organisation. This is a small therapeutic foundation which caters for young people who may have a range of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Most of the young people have therapeutic input from external therapists and the aim is to achieve permanency within a family setting.

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 **outstanding**.

Young people benefit from outstanding levels of support from a child centred staff team. Staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of the young people and have successfully created a nurturing and welcoming environment. Young people are supported to rise to new challenges and reach their desired goals. This is not always easy but the persistency of the staff team and their strong understanding of the young people helps ease young people's anxieties and maximises their possibilities. The management team understands the strengths of the service and is looking for innovative ways to further improve the quality of care provided.

The committed staff team provide an exceptional level of well-planned and highly individualised care through the implementation of comprehensive placement plans; young people are central in all decisions made. Young people's views are taken into account in the running of the home and there are many opportunities to integrate with community events and activities. The support provided contributes effectively to increase confidence and self-esteem; young people are proud of their achievements. Young people are given various opportunities to fully experience independence and have comprehensive and realistic plans in place to develop the skills necessary to transition into the independence cottage.

Young people say they feel safe and they are looked after well. Unsafe behaviours are challenged appropriately and have reduced significantly. The home is proactive in working in partnership with the young people and professionals to develop strategies

to ensure the young people's safety is paramount.

The monitoring of the service is thorough. However, recommendations identified at this inspection are to develop and improve administrative processes and to record what is being done in practice.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views and wishes of children are taken into account in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- review the children's guide to include how children can find out their rights, how a child can contact their independent reviewing officer, the Children's Rights Director and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13.5)
- ensure records are kept securely and in a permanent form; in particular, that records cannot become detached. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make significant progress in many aspects of their lives; their emotional well-being, confidence and self-esteem are developing well. The staff have consistently high expectations and provide encouragement, incentives and celebrate any progress. Consequently, young people develop a positive view of themselves and are proud of their achievements. Staff support young people to have an understanding of their past through life story work, photographs and therapeutic intervention. This practice is enabling young people to think about their current placement and their future plans. One young person commented 'It is good here; we have our ups and downs but its ok.'

Young people are encouraged and supported in adopting healthy lifestyles, through an extensive range of physical activities and a nutritious diet. Young people are actively involved in contributing to the menu each week. Young people are provided with a vast amount of information and are given numerous opportunities to spend time with staff to discuss and make decisions on their overall health and well-being. Young people also have individual healthy eating plans in place, which are comprehensive and provide realistic goals for the young people to achieve. The service has further developed the range of therapeutic services offered to support the young people. The therapy available is specialised and matched to the individual needs of the young people accessing the service. This includes play therapy, equine therapy and therapists who have skills in areas including anger management, racism and eating disorders. This is benefiting young people in a variety of ways and

enabling the young people to further progress. One social worker commented 'the setting meets all the health needs of the young person as is very proactive in achieving this.'

Young people are supported extremely well in attending full time education. Staff fully recognise the value of education and it is an expectation within the home that all young people attend an appropriate school placement. This has resulted not only in excellent attendance but young people are making significant progress within their educational placement. These achievements are celebrated; this is further enhancing the young people's self-esteem. Young people talk positively about their learning opportunities and have clear aspirations for the future.

The young people are able to make and sustain relationships with school friends and make friendships with young people from other homes in the organisation. Young people are supported with contact visits and telephone calls to their family members. They benefit from the emotional support of staff at these times. This practice enables young people to maintain relationships with significant people in their lives.

Community involvement is encouraged and young people are members of youth clubs and community based activities. Some of the links are with sea cadets, kickboxing and dog walking. This encourages young people to participate in an activity and provides an opportunity to socialise with others in the community outside of the residential group. The home has further developed links with the local community and has recently been involved in a number of charity events. Young people are positive about this involvement and are proud of their achievements; this is promoting their self-esteem and giving them a sense of empowerment within the community.

Young people are fully prepared for independence and moving on from this placement. The home has a self-contained cottage next door to the property. This enables young people to experience looking after themselves with staff support on hand. There are clear and comprehensive individual independence plans in place for the young people. Young people are very enthusiastic about this opportunity and work hard to develop the skills to be able to transition to the cottage.

Quality of care

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

A strength of the service is the supportive and nurturing environment provided in which young people begin to feel safe. Young people benefit from the quality of the relationships they have developed with the caring members of staff working with them. Staff have consistently high expectations of the young people and this is reflected in the respect the young people show for the staff. This practice enables young people to develop a positive self-view. Young people receive an outstanding quality of care from a staff team who ensure the well-being of each young person is at the centre of their practice. Young people comment 'I really like it here' and 'I can talk to staff.' One family member commented 'The home provides an excellent level

of care.' Young people also benefit from appropriate relationships with each other. Even though there is conflict between the young people at times, there are also periods when they have fun together.

Young people are listened to and encouraged to express their views and opinions. 'Kids chat', residents meetings and feedback from internal questionnaires give opportunities for young people to express their views in the running of the home, for example requests for a football game, a football goal and a paddling pool have been listened to and acted upon. Clear feedback is given to young people following all requests. Young people are given a range of opportunities to inform staff of their feelings; this is achieved through direct work, one-to-one work and meals out as a group with the manager. A comments box is easily accessible to the young people in the family room. This allows young people to express their views in a confidential manner if they do not feel ready to be able to approach a member of staff.

The young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan, which clearly indicates their individual and cultural needs and their personal identity. Placement plans are comprehensive and regularly reviewed and ensure staff are kept up to date and fully aware of the needs of the young people. Young people are fully supported to contribute to their placement plans and their views are taken into account before they are finalised. Young people are encouraged to attend their review meetings. This ensures young people are able to make their views known about their care and as a result, young people feel involved and consulted.

The home has built exceptionally effective partnerships with external agencies. Communication with outside professionals is described as excellent and this ensures a holistic approach is achieved. The staff work with the young people and advocate on their behalf to challenge any situations should the need arise. This ensures young people receive the support they require. One professional commented 'The communication from the home is great and they work closely with all parties involved with the young person.'

The home is situated in a residential area within easy reach of local facilities. It provides a safe, pleasant environment in which young people enjoy living. The young people have their own bedrooms, which they decorate to reflect their own individual personalities and interests. The accommodation is well resourced and provides good spaces for group and individual activities. Memorabilia and photos of the young people are proudly displayed around the home, providing the young people with the opportunity to reflect on the positive experiences they have had. One social worker commented 'I like the fact you can see lots of photos of the young people in the home, it makes it feel homely.'

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 safe at the home. They may not always like the

house rules and staff supervision but they acknowledge they are in place for their safety. Opportunities are regularly given to young people to discuss ways to keep themselves safe when out in the community and potential risks and dangers they may put themselves in. The home looks very closely at trends and patterns in any incidents when a young person is missing from care. There is a culture of openness and inclusion of the young people in formulating strategies to reduce incidents. This has resulted in a large reduction in this behaviour. The home liaises closely with the community police officers and families to minimise the risk of re-occurrence. The home has been proactive and staff are booked to complete further training in recognising signs of sexual exploitation and keeping young people safe. The staff team fully recognise the vulnerabilities of the young people and are vigilant in ensuring their safety.

The welfare of the young people is fully promoted and the young people are protected from abuse. Staff are fully aware of the home's child protection procedures and have an excellent understanding of their responsibilities in responding to an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Young people are protected from bullying. They said bullying is not an issue within the home and felt that staff would take immediate steps if there is an indication that bullying is taking place.

Staff communicate clear expectations regarding boundaries that help young people to begin to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Young people are encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how it impacts on others. The training staff receive is based on redirection and intervention to calm a situation quickly. Restraint is only used when felt necessary to ensure safety; there have not been any incidents of restraint since March 2012. Comprehensive behaviour plans ensure there is a consistent management of behaviour within the home. The home looks in detail at trends and patterns in behaviours and look at strategies to reduce certain behaviours such as aggression. This results in staff having an understanding of the young people's behaviour and being able to resolve conflict before it escalates.

The home has a robust recruitment process, which ensures all necessary checks are completed before a member of staff starts work, which protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people. The process has recently been developed further to ensure competent and suitable staff are employed by going through a comprehensive interview process. Young people are actively involved in the recruitment process and a number of young people have been selected to be part of an interview panel. This practice is empowering the young people in decision making within the home.

The environment is physically safe and secure taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people cared for. There is a rigorous approach to health and safety matters. Comprehensive risk assessments identify risks associated with premises, environment and activities. As a result, young people benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact on their welfare.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a Registered Manager and staff team that are committed and focused on improving the quality of care provided. The manager has recently completed his registration with Ofsted; and he fully understands the strengths of the service and is aware of development. The manager is both approachable and supportive, which is appreciated by the staff and the young people. The manager ensures he is actively able to consult with young people and make himself available to them and the staff team. Although there has been a high staff turnover in the last year, there has been a clear focus on creating an enthusiastic and competent staff team. This has been achieved through the dedication of the senior management team. The Registered Manager had addressed the recommendations raised at the last inspection and this has further improved the standard of care provided at the home.

The provider meets the aims and objectives that are set out in the Statement of Purpose. Young people receive a vast amount of information on the home in an accessible format which allows them to have an understanding of what care is provided by the home. However, the children's guide does not contain information on how the young people can secure access to an independent advocate or how a young person can contact their independent reviewing officer or the Children's Rights Director.

Monthly monitoring of the quality of care is completed by a senior manager and the manager completes six-monthly monitoring. The monitoring of the home has developed into a comprehensive robust process and actions identified from the systems are promptly addressed. This ensures the manager has a grasp on the strengths of the service and any areas to improve on. The service is proactive in engaging with parents and professionals and using their comments to formulate development plans. The home's development plan is clear and focused on improving the quality of care. However, the views of the young people are not fully incorporated into the plan to enable them to be fully involved in the planning of the future for the home.

Staff members are fully supported within their work through regular supervision, excellent training opportunities and clear policies and procedures to support them. Staff receive regular opportunities to discuss their practice and relationships with the young people.

The home has addressed any complaints and worked with the young people and parents in resolving issues before they result in a formal complaint. There is a clear and comprehensive audit trail for any issue received and clear outcomes. This ensures the home is able to monitor and learn from complaints effectively.

Young people's files are stored securely and contain documents, which are relevant and contribute to an understanding of the young person's life. This helps staff in supporting young people to understand their background. However, some paperwork is not fixed into books securely. Therefore, important paperwork

concerning the young person could be misplaced.

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.