

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Maureen Hamer
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run home accommodates six young people of either sex . The home offers 24-hour care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities on the autistic spectrum.

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**.

This home provides an excellent nurturing environment in which young people feel respected and show exceptional progress. Young people respond positively to a stable staff group that provides high quality and consistent care. Young people's self-confidence grows and this helps them to develop their willingness and ability to communicate how they feel and to positively manage their challenging behaviour.

Attendance and educational attainment is very good. Risk taking behaviour, such as anti-social behaviour, stops. Social workers state that the home could not do more for the young people.

Management of the home is good and high regard is given to ensuring that staff are well supported and provided with very good training opportunities. The progress of young people is well known. The strengths and weaknesses of the home are well known and new quality assurance systems have been put in place. However, it is not clear, from the quality assurance reports, how young people, parents and placing authorities have been consulted.

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
34 (2001)	ensure the monitoring of matters set out in schedule 6 provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authority. (Regulation 34 (3))	31/01/2013

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people show excellent progress in their emotional well-being as a result of living in a nurturing home. Young people thrive and are able to reflect on their past and understand how their past negatively impacts on their behaviour. Young people talk about how they are now determined to do well and say that staff have helped them to positively change their lives. A social worker talked about how staff have helped to turn things around and said, 'Now the young person is managing his family and his life. They are always there for him, a remarkable job.'

Young people's health needs are well known and addressed. All young people are registered with the local dentist and general practitioner to ensure that they have ready access to local services. Young people show a good knowledge of healthy lifestyles. There is regular input to help young people learn about positive health behaviours. Young people are strongly discouraged from smoking and those who do smoke are offered regular support to reduce and to stop the habit. All young people are members of the local gym and enjoy going out as a group with staff to play football in the local park; this enhances their social and physical well-being.

Young people, who prior to living in the home had had very long periods of absence from school, now have exceptional attendance. Some young people have home tutors to provide them with personalised education on a fulltime basis. One tutor stated, 'Staff give amazing support they are always there to help him; I am not sure they could do more.' Young people comment that they wish they had done more at school and older young people say that they encourage other younger people in the home to do their best at school. This positive role modelling has a very positive impact on other young people's attitude to going to school and to doing well. Application to school work has greatly improved and all young people are undertaking work to attain GCSE level qualifications.

All young people are very successfully engaged in the running of the home. Their

input is gained into the redecoration of the home as well as how they want to organise and furnish their own bedrooms. Some young people have participated in growing vegetables in the home's garden. Menu planning is a regular activity for young people as is helping with preparing food. Some young people excel at cooking and take great pride in being able to cook a meal for everyone living in the home. Young people clearly gain a great sense of confidence from living in and contributing to this home. Their sense of belonging has led to young people engaging in the home; they have developed respect for the home and consequently damage to the home does not take place.

Staff work with young people, and when appropriate with parents, to promote positive contact. This enables significant relationships to be maintained or to be rebuilt. Interpreters are accessed to ensure that there is good communication between the home and parents who have English as a second language. As a result parents are fully involved in their young people's care. Parents are also supported to reflect on the past and to act to make positive changes to their relationship with their children. This enables young people to have meaningful contact with their parents that helps them to mature and make a successful transition to adult life.

As a result of increased self-confidence young people take great care of their personal hygiene and appearance. Young people have bank accounts and are helped to develop their budgeting skills. Young people share chores around the home so there is a sense of shared ownership and responsibility. When appropriate for the young person semi-independent living is supported as part of a successful transition to adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Staff are highly committed to ensuring that young people receive an excellent quality of care. They provide a stable and consistent environment that helps them to thrive. All young people have excellent relationships with staff. Young people say that they feel listened to and respected. Young people greatly value and look forward to key working sessions; they say, 'we get to talk about what we are doing and about our future. It's good.'

The staff's knowledge and understanding of each young person is exceptional. Care plans are clear, comprehensive and highly individualised. Progress reports are of a high standard and are completed with young people's engagement on a regular basis. Behaviour and risk assessments are detailed and the impact actions on behaviours is so that effectiveness can be demonstrated.

Staff are active at identifying antecedents to challenging behaviour. They work exceptionally well with young people to help them to understand their negative feelings and to manage their emotions. Young people show exceptional progress in taking responsibility for their behaviour and in managing their feelings. Staff are very accomplished at working with young people to manage disappointment when their

requests are not met. As a result young people feel positive about themselves and remain engaged in communication with staff and with other young people.

Young people state that staff have helped them to understand how their past experiences have made them act in a way that is harmful. Episodes of challenging behaviour are rare. A social worker reported, 'Staff in the home are always there to help. I am not sure they could do more. Young people say, 'If we start winding each other up staff are able to talk to us and we quickly calm down. We get on really well.'

Young people know how to raise concerns and how to make a complaint. The children's guide has been put together with input from young people. It is available on a DVD disk and includes contact information in the event that young people want to gain independent help.

Staff act as excellent advocates for young people; for example, through enabling successful entry to education, college and apprenticeships. Young people's timetables are well known by staff who also attend all parents' evenings. Support with homework is in place for all aspects of young people's education. One young person stated that he had enjoyed a member of staff helping him with his guitar playing and that this was also contributing to him doing well in his GCSE in music.

Activities are available in the home and outside the home that young people enjoy doing individually, and at times as a group. Staff act to support young people to access their interests, such as army cadets. Young people are engaged in charity events through the voluntary work of a member of staff. This improves young people's awareness of life and interests outside of the home.

Staff ensure that all young people have their own achievement folder. This provides them with an excellent portfolio of their academic and vocational successes and is used to guide their curriculum vitae. Young people appreciate the help that they receive from staff and show a sense of pride in their achievements.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel and are safe and secure in this home. This is achieved because staff have an excellent awareness of each young person's needs and there is exceptionally good communication between young people and staff; this means that any form of intimidation would be identified by staff and promptly acted upon to ensure young people are safe.

Staff provide young people with excellent support to help them to manage their behaviour. Physical intervention is rarely used. There has been one incident since the last inspection which was robustly reported and reflected on to learn lessons so as to avoid future incidents.

Young people's risk taking behaviour has greatly reduced. Prior to living in the home young people had a history of going missing. Following living in this environment, in which young people feel valued, there have been no episodes of young people going missing. Young people now enjoy staying at home eating an evening meal and watching television with other young people and staff. There are occasionally episodes of young people going absent without authority, on the rare occasions when this occurs staff work with young people to ascertain the reasons for them being absent. Young people cooperate with staff so that their whereabouts are always known and they are kept safe. In addition episodes of self-harm have stopped. A social worker commented, 'Staff managed to get the young person engaged with mental health services when previously he would not engage.'

Risk assessments are robust. A social worker reported that, 'Staff have done a remarkable job. Young people feel secure and have safe boundaries. There were considerably risky behaviours but they supported him to accept help. Aggression has greatly reduced he is happier and successfully getting on with his life.'

The staff team is very stable and no new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. Before using agency staff the home follows a thorough vetting process to ensure that they are suitable to care for young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a suitably qualified manager who is very well supported by the responsible individual for the home. The culture of the home is very positive for young people and staff and this makes them feel valued.

There is very effective staff supervision in place as well as staff meetings that are reflective and young- people focused. This promotes consistency of care, impacts positively on the quality of care and greatly contributes to achieving positive outcomes for young people. Staff say that they feel very well supported by management and they get good support from each other.

The home has responded to the requirement made at the last inspection and has put in place a system to gather quality assurance information to inform the priorities for improvement. The management of the home has a robust understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Input is also gained from placing authorities and young people in the evaluation of the service. However, this input is not detailed within the quality assurance reports.

Management and staff can talk with clarity about the difference that the home is making to effect positive changes in young people's lives. There is a strong drive and clear capacity for continuous improvement. The Statement of Purpose is very comprehensive and includes the home's aims and objectives; this means that placing authorities and parents have access to information about how the objectives of the

home are achieved.

There is a programme of home improvements, such as the purchase of new carpets, taking place to ensure that the home is well maintained and homely. This greatly enhances the home's environment and contributes to young people taking pride in their home.

Statutory reviews are up-to-date and there have been very good professional relationships developed with relevant partners. Consequently when an issue arises quick action is taken to provide effective support from all parties. Staff engage young people in a very meaningful manner in compiling their progress reports in preparation for reviews. This promotes young people's control of their lives.

The management of the home has a high regard for staff and for the need for them to receive on-going high quality training to enhance their individual skills. This motivates staff and has a positive impact on staff retention because they feel valued and very well supported. In addition this greatly contributes to the positive culture of the home and to the successful outcomes that young people achieve.

Significant events are well recorded and appropriate relevant partners are informed of such incidents to ensure that appropriate action is taken and young people are kept safe.

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.