

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is one of a number of children's homes run by a private organisation. This home provides medium- to long-term care for up to four young people of either sex, between the ages of 11 and 17 years.

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 say that they feel safe and are supported well by staff at the home. This enables them to make good progress and achieve positive outcomes, in particular with relationship to education and behaviour.

They also benefit from positive support with their health care needs and this along with support to lead healthy lifestyles provides positive health outcomes.

Staff work in conjunction with other agencies to ensure that young people receive a holistic level of care and support. Positive links with parents and families enable positive contact arrangements to be supported.

Young people are consulted on a regular basis to ensure that their wishes and views are incorporated into their overall care plans. Where it is not possible to act on their wishes, this is explained clearly to them. They benefit from good quality of care and support from a consistent staff team who receive appropriate levels of training and supervision. Regular monitoring of how the home operates both by the manager and external monitoring ensures that the home continually strives to improve outcomes for young people and any identified weaknesses are addressed appropriately. Areas for development are in relation to ensuring that risk assessments are discussed with young people and care plans are shared and signed with all relevant parties.

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 views of the child's social worker are sought regularly on the child's care. This is specifically in relation to agreeing individual placement plans (NMS 1.4)
- ensure that children's safety and welfare is promoted in the home, with particular regard to ensuring individualised risk assessments to which children contribute. (NMS 4.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress during their time at the home. They have positive relationships with the staff and this enables them to feel supported well. They benefit from a continuity of staff and say that the staff listen to their wishes and feelings and are fully involved in their overall care. This provides them with a clear understanding of their individual needs and plans for their future.

Staff work proactively with young people to promote good health outcomes. Individual health care plans form part of the overall care plan. Young people are enabled to maintain good health. This includes registration with health care professionals including doctors, dentists, and opticians and support to attend appointments. They develop a clear understanding of their own individual health care needs and positive health care promotion. This includes maintaining a healthy lifestyle through diet and exercise as well as an understanding of the negative impact of smoking and drug misuse. These measures promote good health for young people.

The home effectively promotes educational outcomes for young people. They attend school on a regular basis and staff liaise closely with teaching staff to provide additional support. This includes arranging educational activities, including visits to local museums, support with homework, attending parent's evenings, and contributing to personal educational plans. When a young person commences at the home from out of the area, staff are proactive in securing educational placements and work in conjunction with the placing authority placement plan and, where appropriate, liaising with the previous educational facility to gain information regarding specific educational targets. These measures ensure that young people's educational needs are continually supported.

Young people have a strong sense of identity. Regular contact with parents, friends and significant others is supported and encouraged unless there are any specific restrictions in place. Communication between the staff and families is excellent. Comments received from parents include, 'Staff support my child really well and keep me fully involved in what is happening. This is very reassuring from me.'

Activities are encouraged and promoted. Key workers discuss these with young people on an individual basis and plan on a weekly basis. These include accessing local community facilities to take part in exercise classes to maintain good health, shopping, trips to the cinema and also some trips further away, for example camping weekends. Young people say that they enjoy the activities available to them.

Quality of care

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

Young people have good relationships with the staff. One young person said, 'Staff are really helpful and I feel that I have been supported to settle here really well.' Another young person said, 'I get on with most of the staff and there is always someone that I can talk to if I choose to do so.' Regular young people's meetings take place and this enables young people to discuss and contribute to discussions about how the home supports them. This includes discussions about menus, activities, social events and trips out. In addition, all young people have a keyworker and regular keyworker sessions enable them to discuss their individual plans, goals and progress. These sessions are recorded and young people are encouraged and supported to include their own views to these records. These measures ensure that young people's views are sought regarding their care and how the home operates.

Young people receive a welcome pack to the home and this includes a copy of the children's guide. This includes details about the home and the house rules. Information is also included on how to make a complaint. This includes how to contact Ofsted and Children's Rights Director. Young people say that they are confident that if they had a complaint that this would be dealt with fairly by the manager of the home.

Young people have detailed placement plans that clearly outline their individual needs and the support required to meet these. These include details of health care, education, and support to achieve positive outcomes. Young people contribute to their placement plans. This enables them to be involved in their care planning. However, not all care plans clearly demonstrate that they have been discussed with individual placing authority social workers to ensure open and transparent communication.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe living at the home and that staff discuss issues of safety and well-being with them. This supports them to have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe. They say that they feel able to speak with staff if they have any worries or concerns.

Individual care plans and risk assessments are undertaken. Young people contribute their views and opinions to their care plans. Regular reviews of care plans are

undertaken and young people contribute their views on the review format. This enables them to have a clear understanding of all aspects of their care including safeguarding. However, young people do not have the opportunity to sign their individual risk assessments. This does not enable them to always have a clear understanding of why certain risk assessments are in place.

Young people are encouraged and supported to respect one another. Young people say that bullying is not an issue at the home. Staff are aware of the signs and symptoms to be aware of and ensure that young people have the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns within individual key worker sessions and within young people's meetings. This enables young people to feel safe in raising any concerns and confident that if they are being bullied it would be addressed appropriately.

Individual behaviour management strategies are in place for all young people. Staff ensure that positive behaviours are encouraged and supported. Young people contribute their views with regards supporting and promoting positive behaviours. This includes individual reward systems as well as discussing appropriate sanctions. All staff complete training in conflict resolution and this reduces the risk for physical interventions. There have been no physical interventions since the last inspection.

The home has a clear missing from home policy and procedure in place. Staff are aware of the importance of ensuring that if a young person goes missing then appropriate actions are followed. This includes trying to contact the young person by telephone, searching the local area, contacting known associates and contacting relevant authorities in line with the young person's individual risk assessment. Upon their return, all young people are able to discuss any issues that may have contributed to them going missing from the home. These measures contribute to the safety and wellbeing of young people and have reduced incidences of young people missing over recent months.

Recruitment and selection of staff is robust. All staff, prior to commencement of employment have appropriate interviews, references, and enhanced disclosures undertaken. These measures further promote safety of young people living at the home.

The home provides a comfortable and homely environment. All appropriate health and safety checks are undertaken. This includes regular fire checks and drills. Young people are included in these and this ensures that they are aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire. A regular programme of maintenance is undertaken to ensure that the home provides the young people with a safe and homely environment.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified Registered Manager who has the knowledge and skills to provide clear and consistent child-focussed management of

the home. The manager is supported by a qualified and competent deputy manager and dedicated staff team. Most of the staff hold relevant child care qualifications or are in the process of completing these. This ensures that young people experience improvements to their development and well-being across a range of outcomes.

Staff say that they feel very well supported and receive regular supervision and appraisals. Regular training and a development programme are in place. This enables staff to build on their individual knowledge and skills resulting in good quality of care and support for young people. Staff meetings focus on achieving improved outcomes for young people and are used as an opportunity for staff to share their skills and knowledge to further their development.

The home operates in accordance with its Statement of Purpose which is kept up-to-date and made available to interested parties. It is sufficiently resourced in terms of finance and staffing. Staffing levels are appropriate to meet the needs of the young people living at the home and are kept under review. Monitoring systems are in place both internally and externally to ensure appropriate scrutiny of the operation of the home. These measures ensure that the needs of young people are effectively met and the home responds appropriately to any requirements or recommendations made.

Young people's records are maintained appropriately and contain a clear picture of their life, development and achievements during their time at the home. Records are up to date and stored securely. Young people are encouraged and supported to contribute to these records to enable them to have an understanding of their achievements and progress made during their time at the home.

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 children's homes.