

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Halliley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately owned and is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children of either gender. The home offers care and accommodation for children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 make very significant progress in all areas of their lives while living in this home.

Each young person benefits from an individualised and very detailed placement plan which informs staff practice. Young people are actively involved in completing and reviewing these plans to ensure they are fully aware of their targets and goals. Outcomes are very positive with great progress being made in terms of social interactions, behaviour management, emotional development and education.

Young people's views are central to the running of this home. Young people are clear their thoughts and feelings are listened to and acted upon. This supports them in feeling they are valued as individuals and as part of the home's community.

Young people have good relationships with staff and are all able to identify staff they can talk to. The home has been very stable for a long time in terms of behaviour and this supports the fact that relationships are sound, young people feel respected, and staff work with them in a very proactive manner.

Young people all state that they feel safe and are able to explain ways in which staff work to ensure they are kept safe. They are also able to reflect on how staff have supported them in managing their behaviour, doing well in school and planning for their futures.

The Registered Manager is clear about the strengths and weaknesses of her home.

She has a development plan in place to move forward and has a very clear vision of where she wants the home to be in the future.

Minor shortfalls are identified in the involvement of young people in fire drills and the recording of one use of physical intervention. There was also an issue identified around behaviour management on one occasion, though this has been thoroughly dealt with by the Registered Manager and has not been repeated.

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 where children's homes use restraint, staff are trained in the use of physical restraint techniques and only use the home's agreed techniques (NMS 3.15)
- ensure there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and children are familiar with and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that all staff's work is consistent with the regulations, national minimum standards and the homes policies and procedures; this relates specifically to correctly cross referencing information recorded following a physical intervention. (NMS 21.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in all areas of their lives while living in this home. This includes improving social skills and awareness, developing an understanding and empathy for others, educational attendance and attainment and the ability to better self-regulate behaviour.

Young people say they get on very well with staff and that staff have helped them to better understand the reasons why they feel angry. They also state that staff have helped them to manage their own behaviours better than they did when they first came to this home. Parents confirm that behaviour on home visits is much improved and that there is clear evidence of young people thinking about their responses to situations rather than acting impulsively. Young people are benefiting from consistent approaches to managing their behaviour and they are able to utilise new skills to help manage their own behaviour in more appropriate ways.

In terms of emotional understanding and development young people have made significant progress from their starting points. A social worker says that staff have done incredibly well with young people. There are very clear boundaries and expectations but this is done in a caring manner. They believe this is one of the

reasons young people have become more able to talk openly about emotions and have improved emotional literacy. Young people are also beginning to develop an ability to empathise with others. Their supportive approach towards a member of staff who was ill demonstrates a real step forward in understanding the needs of others and further shows progress in emotional and social awareness.

Young people are in good health and are able to take some responsibility for supporting this. This includes ensuring they prepare balanced menus, participate in activities and attend medical appointments. Older children are encouraged to make their own medical appointments as a means of taking responsibility, developing life skills and understanding the importance of good health. Good access to a range of health professionals, including child and adolescent mental health services and specialist practitioners and therapists ensures young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs are well met.

Education is given a high focus in this home. Young people benefit from good support to attend school and attendance levels are high. Social workers comment that 'attending school every day is a big step forward'. The benefit of regular attendance is shown in the attainments being made which include a number of nationally recognised awards, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications and workplace health and safety certificates. This ensures young people can move on in their education with a solid grounding at a vocational or academic level commensurate with their individual abilities.

Young people make a positive contribution within the home through menu planning, activity schedules and involvement in the redecoration of the building. They also carry out a range of household tasks as a means of developing life skills before starting to work on independence skills. This can range from laying the table to doing laundry to buying food and cooking their own meals. This staggered but clearly well-developed process of learning new skills ensures young people are well prepared for the move to the next stage in their lives.

Young people also benefit from being actively involved in community-based activities and clubs. This helps support the development of appropriate friendships and their ability to interact successfully in a range of social settings. Voluntary work is undertaken by a number of young people and this has been recognised by the local community as residents have been nominated, and received, awards for this work.

All young people have contact with friends and family which ensures they maintain their place in these groups and that important relationships are continued. The level and frequency of contact differs according to individual need, the strength of the relationship and any external factors such as legal restrictions. All young people report that family contact is good and that they enjoy the time they get to spend with their families.

Quality of care

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

Young people develop positive relationships with staff and are clearly able to identify a member of staff they could openly talk to if they had any concerns. Young people say, 'The staff look after me very well, they care about me, they do a lot for me, they make sure I get all the attention I need,' and, 'It's great fun living here. I get on well with the staff and they listen to me and help me do the things I want to do.' Young people are comfortable around staff and that they are aware that they are important as individuals.

Young people's wishes and feelings about the service are actively sought by staff. They are fully involved in putting together a four week rolling menu, planning their activities and the redecoration of their bedrooms. Recently, they have been fully involved in choosing the colour scheme for the redecoration of communal areas. This helps ensure young people live in a home suited to meet their needs and in which they know their views and opinions count.

There is openness about the service which ensures young people know their rights and are able to complain to appropriate parties should they wish to do so. One young person said, 'If I wasn't happy or needed to make a complaint I would speak to members of staff. They would listen to what I had to say and act on my concerns. I could also speak to the manager or my social worker. I could also speak to my Independent Reviewing Officer, Ofsted or our advocacy service.' This is supported by information given to young people when they arrive in the home in an individual format and ensures young people feel fully able to raise any issues they may have.

Young people benefit from highly individualised, regularly updated placement plans which inform staff practice. Young people are actively involved in producing and monitoring these plans. This ensures young people are fully aware of their targets and the progress they are making in meeting them.

Young people's health needs are very well met. Physical health needs are supported by regular access to a range of medical professionals and good procedures for the administration of medication. Young people are aware of the need to maintain healthy lifestyles. One young person said, 'I'm healthy and the food is good here. We have a balanced diet with some treats and takeaways.' Participation in a range of physically demanding activities also supports physical health and well-being. These include bowling, fishing, bike rides, football and sledding. Emotional and psychological health needs are supported by access to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services in both the young person's home area and the home's locality. Additional services are accessed as required to ensure a well-rounded and thoughtful approach is given to ensuring young people are healthy.

Educational attendance and achievement is given a high priority within this home. Young people are supported to attend school through general encouragement, the provision of transport and individual support at the educational placement if required. This ensures young people see their education as important. The home has been actively involved in identifying the correct educational provision for young people and young people themselves are clear they want to be in the best school for

them. Attendance levels for young people are good; one school report states an attendance rate in excess of 97%. A range of achievements and awards given by schools clearly show that young people are taking their education seriously and that the support of staff has been invaluable in helping them to do this.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are very clear that they feel safe in the home. They say that staff work to keep them safe and this includes one-to-one staffing and 'Listening to me when I am not happy and helping me understand how to behave inside the home and out.'

A range of health and safety checks are in place within the home to further protect young people against accident, abuse and potential harm. These include fire alarm system checks, fire drills, water temperature checks, freezer temperature checks and the testing of portable electronic equipment. It is important all young people are involved in fire drills early in their placements. While all young people know what the alarm sounds like and are aware of the procedures to follow this does not ensure they would be able to carry out the emergency evacuation procedures correctly should there be a fire in the home.

Young people do not go missing from this home. There is a clear policy and procedure in place for staff to follow should this occur to ensure consistent and prompt response. This is very clearly linked to local police protocols to ensure a joined-up approach in safely returning young people to the home.

There have been 17 uses of physical intervention or restraint since the last inspection and the frequency of these is reducing. On one occasion staff held a door shut briefly to calm a situation of violent behaviour. The Registered Manager carried out a full debrief with staff about this incident, held discussions about behaviour management in a team meeting and arranged for additional in-house behaviour management training for all staff. This was a very robust and appropriate response to the situation. As the door in question was not the only door to the room this does not constitute a restriction of liberty. However, the response is clearly not a recognised behaviour management technique as described in the package used within the organisation.

Recording of sanctions and restraints is detailed and gives a clear overview of what was happening at the time. However, in one restraint the description of the hold in the narrative does not match the recognised holds used tick boxes. This could potentially be open to misinterpretation should any issues be raised relating to this incident in the future. The Registered Manager has signed off the record but has failed to pick this up when monitoring records.

The home has very robust recruitment procedures in place for prospective staff including a detailed system of vetting and checks. There are also clear policies and

procedures relating to the chaperoning of visitors to the home if young people are present. These ensure young people are protected from potential harm and abuse by staff working with them or adults visiting the home.

There have been no allegations or suspicions of harm in this home recently. However, staff are very clear on their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding and child protection. They are very aware of when they should pass information to managers, what and how information should be recorded and of the need to support both the alleged victim and perpetrator. The Registered Manager is fully aware of her responsibility to share information with outside agencies such as Ofsted or children's safeguarding boards should there be a need to do so. This clear accountability and thorough understanding of responsibility ensures that young people are kept safe both in the home and in the community.

Leadership and management

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

This home is effectively and efficiently managed by a Registered Manager who is passionate about her role. She is dedicated to providing a quality service to young people and their families. One parent commented that, 'The manager is absolutely brilliant and has put my worries aside. It is the first time I have felt someone is there to help me share the burden of looking after a very complex child.'

The Registered Manager has benefited from a deputy manager who has fully embraced his role and this has allowed her to focus on the complete task of running the service and not just the administrative side. She has given additional responsibilities to staff to support their professional development and has overseen redecoration of the home. Staff report that the management of the home is 'absolutely brilliant' and the support from managers 'fantastic'. Others say that managers are, 'Involved in the day to day running of the home, are very approachable,' and that, 'Issues raised in staff meetings are fully addressed.'

The Statement of Purpose has been recently reviewed and updated and provides a comprehensive detail of the service and its stated aims and objectives. One social worker said, 'I was fully aware of the Statement of Purpose and feel the home works towards meeting the stated aims and objectives proactively and clearly.' This supports young people as they are clearly being placed in the right home to meet their needs.

The home is regularly monitored using a range of internal and external systems. This is detailed and mostly precise and supports the Registered Manager to show the positive impact living in this home has on young people.

Staffing levels in the home are high and the manager has used her autonomy to increase staffing levels on a temporary basis due to a change in the group dynamic. This additional staffing ensures that behaviours can be managed, that individual needs can continue to be met and that no young person is adversely affected by the

changing group dynamics. All staff are well trained in a range of subjects including behaviour management, safeguarding and first aid. This ensures that all staff respond to young people in a consistent and safe manner at all times. Regular staff supervision supports personal development and ensures that staff are able to discuss issues with a senior member of staff. The Registered Manager has recently spent time working with staff to reflect on the home's progress and to identify new targets and goals to further improve the service offered.

Records held in the home are extremely well detailed and are held in such a way as to make them easy to understand by young people. Young people are regularly given the opportunity to comment on their records and to review their plans. This ensures they are fully involved in the provision of their care and that they feel it is meeting their individual needs. The Registered Manager has provided notifications of serious incidents promptly and in good detail. Together with regular monitoring reports, this ensures the regulator has a clear overview of what is happening in the home at all times.

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 the inspection of children's homes.