

## Inspection report for children's home

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| <b>Unique reference number</b> | SC441080        |
| <b>Inspection date</b>         | 01/05/2013      |
| <b>Inspector</b>               | Trevor Hall     |
| <b>Type of inspection</b>      | Full            |
| <b>Provision subtype</b>       | Children's home |

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| <b>Date of last inspection</b> | 08/01/2013 |
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

This home is an independent provider's children's home looking after up to three young people aged from 8 to 16 years who have emotional and/or 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 **adequate**.

Young people view the home's manager and staff team as a strength of the home and they consider they are well looked after. Generally a good rapport exists between young people and staff that is both trusting and sincere. Young people express confidence about their ability to express concerns and complaints and are confident that staff take their views seriously.

Sensitive support enables young people to make progress and achieve improving outcomes in most areas. The staff team are motivated and committed to their work. They form meaningful relationships with young people who occasionally exhibit challenging behaviours. They successfully educate and support young people to keep themselves safe and reduce these behaviours. This enables young people to make progress in most aspects of their lives.

Whilst acknowledging that progress has been made in respect of the reintegration of some young people into formal education, not all young people are currently receiving an appropriate education. The lack of female staff deployed to the home means that the home has failed to effectively challenge gender issues, identified in some of the young people's care plans. A statutory requirement and a recommendation have been made to address these issues.

The physical and emotional care of the young people is of a good quality, the home is developing a nurturing atmosphere and young people are encouraged to eat healthily and to take their health care needs seriously. Decision-making is extremely child-focused. Health and safety are seen as a priority and regular checks of safety

equipment help to keep everyone safe.

The staff team fulfil their responsibility to provide care and protection, which ensures young people feel and stay safe. The home's registered manager provides focus to the care team and provides good leadership and support to the care team. Internal and external monitoring of the home is regular and helps to ensure that the quality of care is maintained.

## 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   |
|--------------|--|------------|
| 18<br>(2001) | promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home, in particular by ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential.<br>(Regulation 18(1)(a)) | 30/06/2013 |

### Recommendations

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

- ensure the number and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children resident in the home. This refers specifically to providing staff of appropriate gender to meet care plan requirements. (NMS 17.1)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people enjoy living in a nurturing environment that has well-defined boundaries, whilst remaining both homely and supportive. Young people confirm that they are treated with respect and dignity and are supported by staff to overcome their significant and complex issues. They form positive attachments with the adults who care for them and enjoy generally positive relationships with the staff group, based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps them to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience. As a result, they develop a positive self-view and their feelings of self-worth are increased. For example, young people

who previously damaged their bedrooms and furniture now accept, invest in and benefit from having their own personalised space within the home. Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. Boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality.

Young people are beginning to value and enjoy their environment. They are actively involved in contributing to the selection of furnishings and items for the home. They are also encouraged and supported to decorate their bedrooms. Young people raise suggestions to improve the home through their young people's meetings and in day-to-day discussions with staff.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle and are encouraged to take an active interest in and appropriate responsibility for their own physical health. Healthy eating is encouraged and young people are assisted to understand the benefits of a nutritious and varied diet. Young people make well-informed choices about their personal health, emotional and social issues, including sexual health, relationships, and the dangers of substance misuse.

Young people are successfully encouraged to express their feelings and emotions. The home promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference; as a result, young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and cultures. This ethos also promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Children engage in a variety of appropriate activities in the community. These activities help them to develop their social skills and build their self-confidence and self-esteem.

Staff support enables young people to maintain appropriate contact with their families and important people in their lives, in line with their care plans.

All current residents are on roll of the care company's own registered school and each young person has an individual personal education plan. Prior to admission they all had histories of minimal school attendance and very poor levels of attainment. Individualised education packages, combining home tuition with a graduated re-introduction into a more formal educational setting, are provided to challenge this established resistance. The home's registration, however, does not cover it being used to provide education and the previously indicated timescales for reintegration to a more formal education regime have not been met. Staff maximise every opportunity to help young people engage in education. This supportive approach has enabled some young people to build upon their knowledge and to develop the values and skills they need to help them stay fully engaged in their education. Success in reintegration has been varied, and attendance and attainment, whilst improving, remain fragile.

## **Quality of care**

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

A competent staff team with good leadership have created a nurturing and homely environment. Good quality day-to-day care is provided, which ensures that each young person's individual cultural and gender needs are identified and met. Adults provide good role models that emphasise equality and promote the value of individuality.

The current gender balance of the care team is not reflective of the identified needs of the young people. A lack of female staff has meant that the team has not been able to effectively challenge the negative stereotypical attitudes identified in some of the young people's care plans. Each young person benefits from having an individualised programme of support, in line with their identified needs. This programme is delivered by both the staff in the home and the company's therapy team. When appropriate it is also delivered by independent external specialists, such as clinical psychologists and members of the child and adolescent mental health services team. Comprehensive care plans identify areas for development based upon young people's individual skills and abilities. Young people are enjoying improving relationships with staff, based on mutual respect, which has enabled them to learn how to form more meaningful and sustainable attachments. Staff display good communication skills and young people confirm that they feel listened to and actively involved in their care.

Good care planning supported by up-to-date and accurate assessments of risk ensures that staff have access to good, up-to-date information about the young people in their care. Clear policies and procedures consistently applied by a well trained staff team effectively safeguard young people's health. For example, medication is accurately checked-in, dispensed and recorded.

Young people live in a healthy environment where their individual health needs are identified and services provided to meet them. Care files contain health information and details of each young person's general practitioner, dentist, optician and specific external specialists. Staff support and encourage young people to access external health professionals in line with their identified need. Staff support young people to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them for adulthood. The staff group provides the right balance between nurturing and enabling young people to develop appropriate self-reliance. Clearly maintained records of appointments with health professionals evidence that the physical, emotional and mental health needs of the young people are effectively met.

Young people have their individual cultural, religious, language and racial needs effectively identified and addressed. Young people state that staff are approachable and acknowledge their rights and value their contributions.

Young people confirmed that they know that they have a right to complain and some have done so. None expressed any concern with the home's complaints procedure and all felt that their concerns were taken seriously by the staff. The home has a good policy and procedure in respect of young people wishing to raise complaints.

The management and staff of the home promote high levels of educational attendance and attainment, whilst recognising the difficulties that young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to living at the home. Staff support young people's education and liaise regularly with the staff at the organisation's school; this ensures that young people achieve improving educational outcomes.

Young people are actively encouraged to pursue their own particular interests, and to try new activities. This increases their experiences and helps them to enhance their confidence and their social skills and abilities.

Young people's progress is shared regularly with placing social workers and, where appropriate, with parents, to ensure that they are up-to-date with developments. Placement meetings and reviews take place at appropriate intervals. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their reviews and care planning. This ensures that all decisions are known and understood by all and can be implemented effectively into the daily living arrangements. Up-to-date care plans include all required information regarding young people's needs. This ensures that staff can deliver care that focuses on the individual needs of each young person.

Communication between staff and young people is good, which results in staff being able to respond effectively; this ensures that young people's needs and wishes are well known. Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives in line with their individual needs. They have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of concern. As a result, they feel valued and actively influence the running of the home. Young people present well, wear appropriate clothing and have sufficient belongings to meet their needs. They receive pocket money and appropriate allowances to help purchase clothing and toiletries of their choice.

Young people live in a well maintained home that provides sufficient space to meet their needs. When redecoration or repair is identified as necessary, these are proactively addressed through a short-term maintenance system and a long-term development plan. Young people have good quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings. The home enjoys good links to local facilities and is within reasonable reach of good transport links. The home also has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and contact visits with family.

### **Safeguarding children and young people**

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

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering aspects such as prevention of bullying, complaints, safeguarding and behaviour management. Staff are knowledgeable about these policies and they are effectively implemented. Staff receive good training with regular updates in all these areas, which enables them to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. The

regular and effective monitoring of the home's records and staff practice contribute to ensuring that young people receive safe care in line with their individual needs.

Young people confirm that they feel safe living in this home. The home has a good set of individualised risk assessments for each young person in residence. Risk assessments are proactive, identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these. These cover aspects of the young people's potential behaviour, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake.

When young people display risk taking behaviours effective action is taken to reduce and minimise its impact. For example, staffing levels are increased and the deployment of staff is carefully planned and implemented. This ensures close supervision of young people promoting their safety, while affording them a level of independence to meet individual needs.

Staff promote a positive culture of managing behaviour, with a focus on dealing with issues quickly to avoid escalation. They manage young people's behaviour by building good relationships, listening to them and understanding their triggers. Staff are helping young people to increase their levels of self-control and awareness of the impact of their behaviour. They work well with young people to help them reflect on significant incidents. This strengthens attachments, encourages young people to better manage their future behaviour and shows them that they are supported and valued.

The use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. There is an emphasis on recognising and rewarding positive behaviours, rather than purely punishing those behaviours identified as being unacceptable. This enables young people to develop more socially acceptable behaviour and better prepares them to interact positively with the wider community. Young people understand that the boundaries in place are there to ensure their safety.

Physical interventions are infrequent, being used as a last resort by staff to ensure safety for all. Most incidents are resolved through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. The home's manager monitors each intervention and ensures that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and recorded correctly. Following such incidents, the manager also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, receive any medical attention if required or requested, and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed.

Staff receive regular and wide-ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a good understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, ensures the continued development of staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

The home has effective policies in place in relation to young people going missing. These procedures and their application ensure that the care and support provided



minimises the risk that young people will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should they do so. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement this practice. Staff are acutely aware of the potential reasons why individual young people may go missing, and use this insight to assist them in managing young people's feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner. This deters young people from running off and putting themselves at risk.

The home has a good health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions, drills and equipment servicing are conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales required. Good quality risk assessments of the whole children's home environment have been conducted, which identify all potential sources of harm and include actions needed to address them. These assessments are recorded and regularly reviewed. Good staffing levels further help to keep young people safe and reduce any risk of harm. The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection, recruitment and retention of staff. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person.

## **Leadership and management**

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

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authority's good information about the services offered by the home. The young person's guide is age appropriate and is explained to young people at the point of placement by a member of the staff team.

Since the home's last full inspection there have been several changes in management arrangements, with several acting managers, or managers that did not complete the registration process. The home's new manager is appropriately qualified and experienced and has successfully completed the required registration process. This appointment has restored management stability to the home. A member of staff commented: 'At last we've got a manager, who wants to be here, a manager who knows what he wants and who leads from the front, the home has a sense of purpose and direction. I feel well supported, training is good and I now look forward to coming to work.'

All staff members comment positively about the manager's commitment, child-centred approach and staff support. Clear lines of accountability in the home have enabled a stable, consistent and structured environment to be established. The home keeps sufficient staff on duty at all times to meet the young people's identified needs.

The financial viability of the provider is clearly shown by the development plans for the home. These show dates of further staff training and planned maintenance and decoration to ensure the physical environment is maintained to a high standard.

The staff team is well informed and understand their roles and responsibilities. Staff know who they are accountable to and what tasks and responsibilities are delegated to them. They feel well supported by the home's management. Consistent and regular supervision, coupled with team meetings, provide staff with good opportunities to discuss their role, their professional development and the impact that working with children with complex needs has upon them.

The staff team are positive about the training and induction programme and feel it equips them to meet the needs of the young people. The company's training programme is well established. The staff team receive comprehensive training that is specific to the needs of the young people in residence. Individual training plans are created for every staff member, who initially receive a comprehensive programme of induction, followed by mandatory training that is refreshed at regular intervals.

Internal quality assurance is provided by the home's manager conducting a monthly audit of all the home's reporting systems and submitting a report on the functioning of the home to senior managers. This internal monitoring is supported by monthly external visits, undertaken on behalf of senior managers, which include additional quality assurance mechanisms and involve consulting young people wherever possible.

Young people's case records are clear, up-to-date and stored securely, and would contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their time in care if they choose to access these documents in the future. The registered person notifies the appropriate authorities about all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home.

There were two recommendations made at the home's last interim last inspection, conducted in January. These referred to ensuring that children are supported to attend school, college or alternative provision regularly and to ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. At the time of inspection a major redecoration program was underway. No maintenance issues or obvious health and safety concerns. Whilst acknowledging that progress has been made, in preparing young people to be re-integrated back into formal education, not every young person is currently accessing an appropriate education provision; as such this concern has been elevated to a statutory requirement.

## 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.