

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Linda Leeder
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is a private provision which provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties aged between 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 make good progress in their education and make positive moves onto independence. However, there has been a lack of progress for some young people in managing risk taking and violent behaviour. This has culminated in their placements ending prematurely. Despite this staff and management have worked hard to provide a good quality of care, especially in areas such as keeping young people safe and reducing incidents of young people going missing from the home. Young people have said that they 'felt safe and when living at home and not like a children's home at all, which was lovely'.

Young people are encouraged to behave well and staff follow supportive behaviour plans and risk assessments. Staff are knowledgeable and follow robust care plans that reflect young people's current needs and support individualised care. The home has effective working relationships with a wide range of outside agencies that benefit young people. This includes a developing relationship with the local police unit who have responsibility for preventing sexual exploitation. Social workers have said that staff take their responsibilities seriously and have kept young people safe.

The home is competently managed. The manager regularly audits and monitors all aspects of the home and has a development plan that aims to improve the quality of care provided to young people.

There are some shortfalls. These relate to: encouragement and provision of leisure activities; regular and robust supervision for the Registered Manager and notifying young people of the progress of any concerns or complaints that they may have. The

home needs to ensure that they only admit young people whose needs that they can meet and to replace any defective flooring. However, due to other strengths within the home, these issues do not significantly impact on the overall quality of care for young people.

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 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are encouraged to develop and pursue appropriate leisure interests (Regulation 18 (2) (a))	30/08/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	26/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated with specific regard to the carpets within the home (NMS 10.3)
- ensure that the children's home only provides admission to children whose assessed needs they can reasonably expect to meet (NMS 11.2)
- ensure that children can take up issues in the most appropriate way with support and without fear that this will result in any adverse consequences. Children receive prompt feedback on any concerns or complaints raised and are kept informed of progress. (NMS 1.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people are developing a positive view of themselves and they have increased in their emotional resilience since being placed at the home. For example, young people have said that they are learning to control their feelings better and are

dealing with their anger. They feel very proud of this. Other young people still present with challenging and threatening behaviour if they do not get what they want from staff immediately. This has led to police attending the home and some placements ending earlier than planned.

Social workers have said that the home has decreased the amount of times that young people are missing from home since they have been placed at the service. This increases young people's self-esteem which will better equip young people to manage emotional issues in the future.

Young people's health, including their physical, emotional and psychological health is actively supported. However, some young people do smoke cigarettes despite support given to reduce and stop. Young people demonstrate an increasing awareness of how to live a healthy life; they eat healthily and take regular exercise. Young people are encouraged to develop self-awareness about the benefits of good personal hygiene. This helps to increase young people's self-esteem and self-image.

Young people maintain excellent attendance at school and college. Their self-esteem and progress builds because they are able to achieve targets such as full attendance and participation in vocational and academic courses; this means they are able to try different opportunities and develop new skills. Young people feel good about themselves as they are consistently congratulated for achievements.

A suitable range of activities, both in the home and within the local community, are enjoyed by young people. These include trips to the local town and the cinema going bowling and swimming and trips to the seaside. However, on occasions, some young people say they do not want to take part in activities out of the home. Young people have also said that the extra needs of some young have recently reduced the amount of time and staff availability for individual activities.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their family members and other important people in their lives. Individual contact arrangements are effectively facilitated by the home's staff. This ensures young people are supported to maintain positive relationships with significant people in their life.

Young people's views vary on how well prepared they are to leave care and live independently. Staff encourage young people to maintain their own rooms, do their own laundry and some shopping. Young people eligible for pathway plans have these in place. Plans to help young people move into adult life and gain the knowledge and understanding needed are in place and there have been successful moves by young people into independent accommodation. However, some young people have left placement early and this means that young people may not be as well prepared for adult life as they could be.

Quality of care

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

Young people have strong relationships with each other and with staff. Young people say that, 'staff are really nice and respectful'. Interaction between staff and young people is of good quality and staff enthusiastically encourage participation in education and activities while maintaining boundaries. Effective discussions and plans are made with young people about behaviour management and how staff can help them control any negative behaviour. Social Workers state that 'Staff have high expectations of [the young person] and give lots of praise which has raised [the young person's] self-esteem.' Staff use humour and praise to ensure positive behaviour. This allows young people to develop positive social relationships and attachments.

Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and express their preference for types of food and activities. These are updated on a regular basis during key work sessions, which are accurately recorded and signed by young people. Young people know how to make a complaint. There have been occasions when young people have raised concerns and some young people have not always been kept informed of the progress of their complaint.

Young people are cared for in line with their care plans and staff work cohesively with other professionals to support individualised care. Placement plans reflect a current assessment of need. Plans are reviewed to ensure they are up to date. These include consideration of a young person's culture, race, religion and gender. This means the individuality of young people is acknowledged. There is a good level of detail within young people's placement plans, and the information is known and implemented by staff.

The home has good policies and procedures that relate to young people's physical, emotional and psychological health needs. The staff are proactive in sourcing appointments that will benefit young people's health and they encourage them to attend. These include child and adolescent mental health services, anger management and contraceptive advice appointments. A health professional said, 'young people have a good rapport with staff and respect is shown by both parties; they have been given good advice and have supported young people to make healthy choices.' The home has good quality links with the nurse and GP services responsible for children who are looked after.

Young people are involved in setting individual targets they wish to achieve. These targets are highly individualised and help young people manage things they are having difficulty with such as getting up for school or self-care skills. Looked after Children reviews take place on time and records are held on file. Young people are encouraged by staff to consider what they want to say at reviews. This helps young people have a say in how they are cared for.

The home is appropriately located and the staff have improved relationships with local residents. The home is clean and comfortable and there have been significant improvements in the décor of the home. However, the carpet in the home has become worn and threadbare and needs replacing.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff are aware of the vulnerabilities relating to each young person. A compliment received by a social worker states that, 'the home has gone above and beyond what has been asked if they are concerned about young people's safety'. For example, waking night staff were used to keep young people safe from harming themselves. Key workers talk to young people about the dangers they may be putting themselves in. This helps young people understand the possible dangers; topics cover areas such as alcohol misuse, sexual exploitation and other risks young people may face when they are in the community or missing from care.

The Registered Manager and staff display an excellent appreciation of child protection issues and how to keep young people as safe as possible. Staff are clear about the actions to take if a young person goes missing and when they return. The numbers of young people missing from care at the home fluctuate and is dependent on the needs of the young people accommodated at any one time. There is a very good level of information sharing with the police and other agencies to ensure the risks to young people when they are missing are taken seriously. The Registered Manager has worked with the local sexual exploitation police unit and they visit the home to build up positive relationships with young people thought to be at risk. Young people know staff are concerned for their welfare; staff will take action if they go missing and will continually try to contact them on their mobile phones in an effort to check that they are safe. The incidents of young people going missing have reduced since they arrived at the home.

Visiting professionals state the staff manage the challenging behaviour of young people very well and keep them up to date with progress or concerns. Each young person has a detailed risk assessment and behaviour management plan. This helps staff develop strategies to help them understand the triggers to unwanted behaviours and manage them better in future.

Restraint seldom occurs; they are only used to keep people safe. When restraint does occur actions taken by staff following these incidents show they are sensitively and appropriately followed up. Three restraints have taken place in the last year. Records are well maintained and the views of young people involved are sought in debriefing sessions; these views are recorded. Staff help young people to manage their feelings of anger or frustration and find other ways to express themselves. This helps young people to understand what has occurred. Young people feel their views are valued and this enables them to cope better in a similar situation in the future.

Staff working at the home are carefully selected, vetted and monitored to ensure that young people are protected from harm. Robust health and safety checks, including fire evacuations, are up to date. Consequently, young people live in a safe environment.

Leadership and management

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

The home is competently managed by a new Registered Manager and deputy manager. However the Registered Manager has not received professional supervision during the last seven months. This has resulted in a lack of support and guidance being offered to the Registered Manager. However, the safety and the quality of children's care have been maintained.

The service has gone through a period of change with a new Registered Manager and young people leaving and other young people being placed at the home. Professionals visiting the home have said that 'transition from one manager to another was very positive and no momentum was lost for young people'. However, some young people placed at the home had placements that ended earlier than planned. This has made young people feel less secure and confident which could have an impact on their life chances.

Young people are being cared for by staff who have the knowledge and skills to meet their individual care needs safely. Staff generally receive regular supervision and have said that the sessions are productive and supportive. Training is provided to staff to help them understand the specific needs of the young people they care for. Staff receive excellent support from the management in the home. This enhances the staff's awareness and understanding of the issues young people face and their ability to better support the young people.

All significant events are reported to Ofsted and the placing authority as required. Records are stored securely and contribute to a history of the young person's life at the home. These records will assist young people in the future understand the reasons for staff actions and help them follow their life in the home should they wish to view their files.

The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are clear and staff and the placing authority understand what services and facilities it provides. The young people's guide is informative and is presented in an accessible format for the young people resident at the home. The monitoring of the quality of care provided by the home, including consultation, occurs on a regular basis. External Regulation 33 visits take place monthly and reports are available in the home. The visitor includes the views of young people in the report.

Health and safety requirements are met. Fire drills, fire equipment testing and health and safety checks take place regularly and are recorded. As a result, young people live in a safe environment. Complaints are dealt with appropriately and action is swiftly taken to keep young people safe both in the home and in the wider community. However, young people are not always updated in regards to the progress of their complaint.

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.