

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Peter Harrell
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered for up to seven young people. This service is accredited as a registered therapeutic community. The home is owned and managed by a private organisation. This is a small therapeutic foundation which caters for young people who may have a range of 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 **outstanding**.

This children's home has maintained itself at the forefront of child centred therapeutic care, particularly in looking after young people with complex emotional needs and behavioural challenges. The home achieves excellent outcomes for young people who benefit from outstanding levels of encouragement and support. Young people feel safe and are safe. Safeguarding is robust. It is underpinned with recent meetings at a senior level with police and children's services to ensure that clear lines of communication are in place and vulnerable young people are not being exploited.

Young people have exceptionally good relationships with staff who take an active interest in them and unquestionably care about them and reward their outcomes and achievements. The home is described by the young people as 'a good place where I can talk about what concerns me' and 'the staff make it feel like home'. A parent commented 'I am very impressed with the care, they are brilliant'.

Leadership and management of the service remains very strong, following the appointment of a new manager who has recently been registered by Ofsted and who is well respected by both staff and external child care professionals. The monitoring of the service is thorough. The service is highly regarded by partner agencies, who report close and positive working relationships. Detailed and child focused development plans are in place to enhance the service going forward.

One recommendation is made at this inspection, in relation to ensuring that the new

Registered Manager gains the relevant management qualification. The head of care and Registered Manager are both aware of this matter, which does not have a significant impact on the service provided to young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- make sure that the registered manager enrolls on a management training course within six months, and obtains a relevant management qualification within three years, of their appointment (NMS 14.3).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The progress young people make, in many aspects of their lives, is highly significant and very meaningful. Young people are inspired to do well. They thrive and develop as a consequence of the care they receive from a service that values them as diverse individuals.

Key workers enthusiastically support young people to understand their family and cultural background with life story work, a memory box and photographs. This enables young people to make sense of their lives and understand why they are living at the home. The organisation employs a psychotherapist to work directly with young people and provide guidance and support to the staff. As a result of this, young people can readily access the specialist support they may need from skilled, trained and very competent staff, within a service which is accredited as a therapeutic community.

Young people are able to learn and develop due to clear behaviour management strategies, which set clear boundaries and reward positive behaviour. Highly committed staff fully recognise the importance of educational attendance and achievement. There are high expectations for young people to recognise the value of learning and to do well in relation to their peer group, achievements which are rewarded. Taking into account their starting points, young people's attendance and participation at college and school has increased significantly through consistent messages of encouragement from staff at the home. Young people have definite positive aspirations for the future and talk positively about the activities offered to them and their learning opportunities.

Young people eat a very healthy diet and have access to a wide range of food and nutritional advice. Smoking cessation programmes are in place, with staff actively discouraging some young people from continuing to smoke tobacco, in order to enhance their physical health.

Where agreed, young people are fully encouraged and emotionally and practically supported to maintain contact with their family and friends. They benefit highly from the additional emotional support offered by staff at these times. This enables young people to maintain meaningful relationships with people of significance to them and assists in their overall stability. A parent commented that, 'Staff encourage our contact, they are very patient with my child at helping with this.'

Older young people are prepared for independence and there is an individual independence 'moving on' programme in place. Next door to the home is a self-contained cottage. This facility enables young people to experience looking after themselves with staff nearby. Young people are very enthusiastic about this opportunity and work hard to develop the skills necessary to make the transition to the cottage.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit enormously from living in a highly supportive, stimulating and very nurturing environment.

The overriding strength of the home is the meaningful, warm and positive relationships which exist between young people and the highly committed staff team. The staff team place the emotional wellbeing of young people at the very centre of their practice. Young people take an active role in decision-making in the home: they are consulted and involved in interviewing staff and their views are given a great deal of consideration in this process. On a regular basis, young people are actively encouraged to express their views and opinions and to make personal choices. This takes place through regular meetings and key work sessions. All of this contributes to creating a group of young people who make significant strides in several aspects of their lives.

The enthusiastic staff team is mixed in age, gender, experience and ethnicity, which further enhances the care the young people receive. Reflective group supervision meetings, supported by a psychotherapist, help the staff team in their understanding of therapeutic care of young people. The staff develop skills to understand the way young people can feel upset and become challenging in their behaviour and to be able to continually listen and respond appropriately and positively. The staff team has very high, yet attainable, expectations of young people. Young people commented as follows about the care they receive: 'it is good here, I like it, you don't get talked down to and it's a good place to reflect' and 'you can get your anger down, I can talk about my concerns'. A child care professional for a young person commented: 'I cannot praise the home too highly. Both staff and the manager are always ready to talk to me, and keep me fully informed of any developments. They have shown real interest in and concern about a young person and his future.'

There is active promotion of young people's health needs, with a particular emphasis

on sexual health. Young people are routinely supported to attend any appointments at various local healthcare services and to obtain support and advice. This ensures young people have immediate access to suitable, preventative medical treatment whenever it is needed. Clear and correct procedures for the administration and secure disposal of medication are in place. All staff members hold a first aid qualification and are therefore able to administer emergency treatment if necessary.

Young people are cared for in line with their individualised placement plans, which highlight their cultural needs and any personal identity matters. They are supported to contribute to their plans and have their views fully taken into account. Young people's attendance at their review meetings is high, where they feel involved, consulted and are able to reflect on progress they have made.

Although there is infrequent use of formal complaints procedures, and no complaints were received from young people or others since the last inspection, all young people confirmed that they are encouraged to raise any matters which concern them. There is comprehensive guidance regarding how to raise any concerns in the young person's guide to the home, which is highly detailed and well written, in a way that young people say they can fully understand.

The home is very well presented and maintained. It is situated in a residential area but close to a wide range of local amenities. The home provides young people with excellent facilities in a warm, welcoming, homely, caring and relaxed environment. The home has a cottage-style design, a good level of brightly decorated communal spaces and is furnished to a very high standard. Young people's bedrooms are very personalised. A separate building on the same site provides an excellent training space to promote older young people's independence.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The approach of the service to safeguarding is robust. Employment of any new staff is subject to a very rigorous vetting and selection procedure. The home has in place a comprehensive interview and recruitment process. This ensures staff are suitably checked prior to commencing their work with vulnerable young people.

Safety of young people is a priority. All young people report that they are safe at the home and feel able and encouraged to report any concerns to staff. The Registered Manager and head of care are experienced in child protection work and demonstrate a thorough understanding of safeguarding issues and routinely update safe working practices. Staff work creatively with young people to help them understand risks and give them strategies to avoid and cope with situations where their safety is at risk.

There is regular liaison and clear and up-to-date joint protocols with the police and placing authorities concerning children who go missing. Where this occurs, action is taken to secure a young person's safe return and to minimise these incidences. In

addition, the managers of the service have met with the police at a senior level to discuss suspected incidents of child sexual exploitation in the area and strategies to minimise this risk for young people. This information has been shared with all staff. This is excellent proactive practice.

Young people are supported by high staffing ratios. In order to ensure that young people are managed safely should any incidents take place, staff receive regular training and updates on behaviour management. This training involves the therapeutic strategies of 'de-escalation' that are used to deal with behavioural issues. When used in practice, these strategies reduce the need to use physical restraint. When restraint needs to be used, young people confirm that staff follow the rules for using restraint and that 'they check we are ok'. Young people also say that any sanctions given in response to their misbehaviour are generally appropriate. All sanctions used since the last inspection have been reasonable and fair.

There is a very rigorous approach to health and safety matters. There are comprehensive assessments to identify risks associated with leisure activities and the premises. Consequently, young people benefit from a safe environment and this impacts positively on their overall welfare. All appliances and the premises are regularly checked and fire drills and alarm testing is frequent and effective. The home's environment accounts for young people's needs: it is physically secure without compromising the appearance of the home and young people's liberty.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager recently completed her registration with Ofsted. She fully understands the service's strengths and its development areas. The Registered Manager has high expectations of the staff team and they respond well to this, within a culture of transparency and reflective development. In return, staff members are fully supported in their work through regular supervision, excellent training opportunities and clear policies and procedures. Staff receive regular opportunities with managers and a therapist to discuss and reflect upon their relationships with the young people and their practice.

Young people benefit from being cared for by staff members who are fully supported in their work through extensive training opportunities, regular child-centred and reflective supervision, as well as open access to the Registered Manager. Staff are aware of the sensitive nature and purpose of young people's case records, which are stored securely. Records of young people's regular review meetings are actively obtained. Young people are consulted about and actively involved in the planning of these key meetings.

Comprehensive systems are in place to monitor the home's performance. Registered provider visits happen as required and several are unannounced. There is a purposeful development plan in place for the home, including a child-centred version. The children's home meets the clear aims and objectives that are set out in their

newly revised Statement of Purpose. Child care professionals and parents report high levels of satisfaction with the care provided by this home and young people generally confirm this view.

Currently the new Registered Manager of the service does not possess the relevant level of management qualification. However, a course of training has been identified to ensure the manager obtains the relevant qualification within the next three years to help them deliver an even more effective service.

At the previous inspection two recommendations were made. These have both been fully addressed and resulted in positive improvements for young people. There is now closer review and higher quality monitoring of incidents of challenging behaviour and episodes where children have been missing. Furthermore, there are now more detailed records of increased supervision of staff by the new manager. One recommendation has been made as a result of this inspection, regarding the Registered Manager achieving the qualification for the role.

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.