

Inspection report for children's home

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| Inspector | Tola Akinde-Hummel |
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately run home accommodates six young people. The home offers 24-hour care for young people with emotional 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 **outstanding**.

This home provides an excellent service to young people. Young people thrive in this environment because they are supported by staff that are well trained, conscientious and committed to improving the lives of vulnerable young people.

Young people are unanimous in describing the home as a safe place where they are supported by staff that care about them.

The management of the home is strong. The positive attitude towards young people is filtered through to all the staff. Young people know that staff have their best interests at the centre of what they do. Opportunities that other young people have in the wider community are readily available to young people in the home, giving them the chance to experience normal routines and aspire to do more.

Young people emotional well-being is sensitively addressed using collaborative work with other professionals. The general consensus of all stakeholders, including some parents, is that this is a high-quality service designed to meet young people's needs

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- provide the home with a written procedure for complaints in accordance with

legal requirements and relevant statutory guidance with specific reference to ensuring the correct telephone number of the regulator is available. (NMS 21.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

The young people make excellent progress in the home. They are listened to and feel valued by staff. Young people are encouraged to think about the future and pursue their aspirations through education and training. Young people learn to develop positive relationships with each other and with staff. They learn to live together and show respect for each other, guided by the staff. Young people know that staff care about them and that they are at the centre of their practice.

Young people have an especially good understanding of their health needs and, though reluctant at times, they make attempts to attend all health appointments and seek specialist advice.

Young people feel safe in the home. They have an understanding of risk-taking behaviour and this is kept to a minimum. Young people always have staff to talk to, which minimises the need for them to express their feelings in ways that are not beneficial to them.

One young person said, 'They help me with my confidence. I can sit in room and talk to people and express myself.'

Young people are able to interact with the wider community. They have been encouraged to see beyond their own issues and make a contribution to others less fortunate than themselves in society.

Young people live in a very stable, warm environment that provides a number of opportunities they may not otherwise experience. Young people go to pop concerts, community festivals and access resources in the local area. One young person said, 'I am really looking forward to the holiday; I have been away every year since I've been here.'

Young people are able to have a pictorial record of some of their time in the home to take with them when they leave. This details places they have visited and experiences they have had, reminding them of their varied achievements.

Young people develop excellent independent living skills which enable them to look forward to looking after themselves when they leave the home.

Quality of care

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

Staff are very clear about the purpose of the young people's placement and work towards placement objectives. This means that staff take a consistent and

individualised approach to provide the care and support the young people need. Records of areas for development and progress are clearly defined and young people sign-up to working towards these. Regular one-to-one and key work sessions demonstrate that staff work with young people on the specific issues that they need to address, in line with the placement plan. Despite some resistance from young people at varying times, young people know that staff are working with them in their best interests. One social worker said, 'The young person recognises the staff help meet his needs. He really appreciates the placement.'

Staff are creative in the way in which they encourage young people to engage with them. Young people who require support to manage their behaviour are offered physical activities such as regular exercise and training, practical tasks around the house and community, and opportunities for work placements. This is backed-up by regular praise, reward, and discussions about the impact their efforts and positive attitude have.

Staff communicate remarkably well with each other about the best approach is to take, particularly when young people are experiencing difficulties. One social worker said, 'The staff are really great, they are very child centred and take time to build a relationship. They have dealt with the young person in a calm and sensitive way.' Staff ensure they are readily available to talk to young people at any time to help them make sense of some of the issues they face and decide on the best course of action to help improve their lives.

Young people know how to make a complaint and are given written information on how to do so. However, on some documents the home has the incorrect telephone number of the regulator.

Staff regularly advocate on behalf of the young people. Partnership working with other professionals is a key strength. Good communication enables staff to seek additional support for young people appropriately, thereby ensuring all parties are kept informed of significant developments. One social worker said, 'The staff are a very strong and consistent member of the wider team of professionals supporting the young person.'

Young people educational needs are consistently addressed. The home have supported young people back into school, increasing attendance to 100% and regularly communicating with the school to ensure that each young person's contribution during the school day is positive. When not in school, staff provide extra help in the form of designated time with staff and educational workbooks to further progress young people's learning. In addition, the staff team have provided additional tuition to boost exam grades. As a result of their intervention, the predicted and actual grades young people attain in key subjects are good and this encourages them to increase their focus. One tutor fed back to the home that they recognise the staff have taken exceptional care of educational needs and they are extremely impressed by the running of the home and staff attitudes.

Staff pay excellent attention to young people health needs. They consistently support

young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle through exercise, diet and the education. Staff make and attend health appointments with young people and monitor medication. One social worker said, 'Staff really take on the responsibility of attending health appointments at some distance away from home.'

Young people regularly participate in meal preparation. This enables staff to assess young people's levels of competence in the kitchen. Assessment of independence skills allows young people to identify the shortfalls in their own ability to manage their daily lives. Where there are shortfalls, staff are readily available to teach, prompt, and assist.

One young person said, 'The staff care about me a lot, I can cook and wash my own clothes and I can manage my personal hygiene.'

Staff value young people's opinions on a daily basis but also in more formal settings. Young people's views or requests are taken into consideration when organising any changes around the home or addressing the conflicts that arise as a result of communal living. This empowers young people to have the confidence to express how they feel in a calm, reasonable way, knowing that this will be taken seriously.

Staff work with young people from different cultural backgrounds. Each young person is treated as a unique individual and respected for their differences. Although the home does not currently fully reflect the diversity of the young people living there, staff are acutely aware of this, so this has not impacted negatively on the care and support young people receive. Young people continue to assert that the staff know and understand them well and understand their culture.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel very safe in their placement. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff which increases their sense of safety and security. Incidents of bullying are taken seriously and this is a regular agenda item in residents' team meetings enabling young people to talk openly if they feel threatened or intimidated. One young person stated, 'If there are any problems in the house, staff tend to know about them and sort them out. They are really fair.'

Staff have extensive experience of keeping young people safe. They use a variety of direct and indirect strategies to achieve young people safety. These include regular consultations with professionals and open discussions with young people about the risks associated with displaying challenging behaviour or participating in risky behaviour. One psychologist said, 'The team are thoughtful, flexible, united and consistent. They look through the behaviour.'

Risk assessments are extremely well written and outline how risks will be minimised. Balanced progress reports give insight into the difficulties and challenges young people face and the sensitive way in which staff respond.

Young people do not go missing but on occasion return late back to the home. Young people know that staff will look for them and return them if they know their whereabouts. Staff get to know the friends young people spend time with and assess their suitability. Staff know the parents of local friends and expect young people to introduce them to any new friends in the area. The interest shown by staff gives them further opportunities to explore the nature of young people's relationships. Staff make clear to young people that they will report them missing or absent if necessary, providing them with a leaflet explaining this and advising on additional ways to keep safe. The home have good relationships with the local police; community officers know the staff team and the young people well.

Staff are highly skilled at managing young people behaviour. The staff understand young people's triggers and constantly assess the mood and interactions they have with each other to de-escalate any potential situation before it gets out of control. Young people will call upon staff if there are tensions among individuals in the home. This demonstrates that they trust staff to intervene and that they value living in an environment that has minimal conflict. With every confrontation, young people reflect on their behaviour and are reminded of ways to prevent this reoccurring with the help of staff. One placement manager said, 'The staff can manage challenging behaviour, they have made a difference to young people we have placed there.'

The home completes all required health and safety checks and undertakes safe recruitment of staff to make sure suitable people are employed.

Leadership and management

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

There is exceptional leadership and management in the home. The ethos of the home is well established and staff know exactly what is expected of them.

The home operates according to its Statement of Purpose and this is fully understood by stakeholders. The children's guide, available in written and visual media, gives young people accurate information about what they can expect from the placement. Placement officers from different boroughs are unanimously impressed with the quality of the placements and their relationship with the home. One placement officer said, 'We have a very positive relationship with the home and the provider. They always take into account the needs of all the young people in the home. We have been turned down in the past and are told the reasons why.' Another officer said, 'If there are any safeguarding concerns the home will initiate meetings with other professionals. There is little placement breakdown.'

Staff training, supervision and team meetings equip staff with the skills to provide high-quality tailor-made support to young people. Staff use what they have learnt from other professionals and training to understand young people and address their emotional and physical well-being.

Staff rotas are well organised to ensure there are enough staff available to participate in activities with young people and provide them with quality time. Staff enjoy their work; one member of staff said, 'There is always an opportunity to grow in this organisation. I also learn a lot about and from the young people.'

Young people's records are of superior quality and are written in a way that young people can read and gain a good understanding of their experience in the home. These are securely stored in the home to ensure confidentiality is maintained.

Monthly monitoring visits are completed and sent to Ofsted regularly. The home has an annual development plan. This outlines how the service will improve taking into account the quality of care provided to young people, staff professional development and the feedback obtained from stakeholders.

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.