

## Inspection report for children's home

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<b>Inspector</b>	Maire Atherton
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## Service information

### Brief description of the service

The service is a four-bedded children's home registered for single sex occupancy and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is owned and operated by a private organisation that specialises in the assessment and treatment of male adolescents who have experienced some form of abuse and have subsequently been involved in perpetrating abusive behaviour themselves.

### 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**.

The manager leads the settled staff team to secure good progress for most of the young people. Where progress has stalled or transition plans have been delayed there is a clear programme in place to enable young people to get back on track.

Young people are healthy and know what they need to do to maintain a healthy lifestyle, although this can be a struggle at times. Young people enjoy good relationships with staff and although there are some incidents of anti-social behaviour these are infrequent and young people are engaged in learning from such incidents. Not all sanctions are recorded as required.

Individual care is highly personalised with detailed placement plans that are well known by staff and young people. The plans are a working tool used by all involved to set targets and are regularly reviewed so they remain current and relevant.

There is a strong emphasis on safeguarding, the rationale and implementation of which is clearly understood by the staff and the young people.

There is a cohesive staff team in post who work effectively together in the best interests of the young people living in the home. Support, induction and training are good, although not all staff have completed the induction standards within the

desired timescale.

The manager has a sound understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and although she can outline them verbally this is not fully supported by the broad brush development plan in place.

Young people say 'The house runs smoothly, it doesn't feel like a care home, it feels like a normal home' and 'Staff are great.'

## 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
17B (2001)	ensure that any measure of discipline is recorded as required by regulation (Regulation 17B (3))	31/10/2013

### Recommendations

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

- improve the annual development plan so that areas for improvement are clearly identified with timescales set (NMS 21)
- support all staff to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council induction standards within six months of starting employment. (NMS 18.3)

### Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people learn how to value themselves through feeling valued by the staff team. Young people are building strong attachments which underpin their personal development and enable most of them to engage well in the therapeutic programme.

Young people enjoy good health, none are on regular medication. Young people talk knowledgably about what they need to do to have a healthy lifestyle, and most are achieving this very well with good support where necessary. A social worker commented on a young person's improved presentation, 'He is taking pride in his appearance since moving into the home.'

Young people's attendance at school is good; this is underpinned by established links with the range of education provision attended by the young people. Young people talk enthusiastically about the help staff have given them to find a college course that they want to do that suits their interests and skills.

Young people speak positively about their contribution to decisions that are made in the home. At the time of this visit engagement for most young people with the wider community was under staff supervision, on the basis of detailed risk assessments. Young people have a sound understanding of what they need to do to progress through the steps to unsupervised time in the community. Young people enjoy a wide range of activities and trips, with Mercedes-Benz world a favourite, and the photos on display in the hall evidence their enjoyment.

Young people and their families enjoy contact that they describe very positively. Parents said, 'They manage a difficult situation well, we know staff are there but they are discreet and get involved if you want them to' and, 'Support is really sensitive and discreet, the member of staff is wonderful, understanding and professional.' Families really appreciate the consistency provided by the same member of staff supporting contact and the role of family therapy in achieving unsupervised contact.

Transitions are well planned. Young people talk about feeling really welcomed into the home, the jelly babies in the welcome pack were a strong feature in their accounts of moving in. A young person said, 'It's really good here, nice staff, nice house and you get to do things you want.' Most have an opportunity to visit before moving in, where this is not possible young people say that emergency admissions are managed well. Young people are fully involved in their moving on plans and staff support those experiencing anxiety which may impact on their behaviour causing the process to go back a few steps.

Young people develop self-care and independence skills while at the home. With support from staff they participate in daily household chores such as cooking and cleaning and do their own laundry. They learn to budget through using their individual allowances to buy clothing and personal items, accumulating monthly allowances to buy more expensive items of clothing for example. Thus young people are enabled to learn the independence skills they will need when living independently.

## **Quality of care**

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

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with each other and members of the permanent staff team. A social worker commented, 'They have great rapport with him, they know what he wants before he says it.' Another observed, 'Staff have good relationships with the young people, they enjoy a laugh and a joke.' Relationships with other staff who may be deployed to support unplanned staff absence, sickness for example, are developing. Young people have been involved in devising their

individual behaviour management programmes, setting both goals and the reward system, including a visual aid where required. As a result the behaviour of young people is improving and they have an increasing understanding of what is expected of them.

The skilled staff team communicate very effectively with young people. This enables the staff to actively promote the inclusion of young people in planning the day-to-day running of the home. A young person said, 'Staff are good at asking what you think and feel.' Staff invite young people to air their wishes for the day, taking into account any scheduled appointments, and through discussion plans for the day are made. Young people are empowered so that on the rare occasion where this does not happen they raise it as an issue and they say that staff take appropriate action. Young people are equally confident in the formal complaints system; they feel this works well when necessary, which is infrequent. Staff take time to explain to young people the reasons why not everything can happen as they would wish, and although young people might not be happy with the outcome they do accept the explanation given.

Placement plans are comprehensive and of a very high standard. They reflect the overall aims in each of the areas of, health, education and personal identity, for example. The goals that the young person is working towards to achieve the aims, the actions to be taken by staff, how the outcomes will be measured and a record of achievement are all included in the plans. They are known by the staff and young people and are used as a working tool to inform day-to-day practice in the home. There is an easily accessible version for young people available too. Staff encourage young people to be fully involved in the process, some participate in the core meetings where the plans are reviewed by the therapist working with the young person and the residential and education key workers.

Staff deliver consistently strong messages about healthy living and provide active support for young people to achieve both a healthy diet and lifestyle. For example staff have sought information for young people to provide support to give up smoking. The organisation has strong support from health professionals working in partnership with the young people and the staff. These include consultant psychiatrists, a speech and language therapist, an art therapist and psychologists. Young people also have good access to universal health care services, thus effectively promoting their general health.

The staff support and promote the education of young people well, whether attending the in-house school, main stream provision or college placements. Young people talk enthusiastically about the help staff have given them to find a college course that they want to do that suits their skills. A social worker commented, 'Education is very well supported by the organisation.'

Young people access a wide range of activities both as a group and individually. One social worker said, 'He is thrilled with the activities he gets to do.' Young people enjoy football and cricket in local parks, day trips during the summer to theme parks and to London using public transport; a first for one young person. Staff also explore

individual interests, learning to play guitar for example. The young people are also looking forward to and planning for an autumn holiday away.

The majority of professionals and stakeholders involved with the home report good working relationships with the staff team. They feel they are working together to secure positive outcomes for young people. Most said, 'communication is fantastic', but another view was, 'communication is not as always good as it could be.'

The house is in an established residential area, with good access to a full range of local facilities, including public transport. The home is well maintained and provides young people with comfortable, homely accommodation.

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

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

Young people say they feel safe in the home. Staff successfully convey the central ethos of home, which is keeping yourself and others safe, within a therapeutic framework. Young people understand that the house rules and the space boundaries are in place to support this; they observe that this 'seems sensible' and in the main are adhering to the rules. There is a clear risk management process, well implemented in practice, that supports staff in caring safely for the young people. Staff are trained in and demonstrate a good understanding of key safeguarding issues and protocols so that they know what to do should child protection concerns arise.

Young people feel cared for by the staff team. The vigilance of staff in the supervision of young people minimises opportunities for bullying to occur. Staff challenge any such instances effectively so that young people do not report bullying as an issue in the home. Young people talk freely and openly with staff and they value the work with their individual workers from the therapy team. Young people rarely go missing, and if they do it is only for a short time. Staff demonstrate good understanding of the triggers and motivators for young people in absenting themselves. The staff have a good relationship with the local community support officer who visits to talk with young people about the potential risks associated with this behaviour.

The behaviour management model used by staff, which does not use physical intervention, has a clear emphasis on rewards for desirable behaviour. It is well structured so that young people have a sound understanding of what they need to do. Staff and young people meet daily and all provide feedback about themselves and each other on meeting their goals. Staff infrequently use sanctions, there was one instance found where an imposed sanction had not been recorded as a sanction. There were two group sanctions where young people had been involved in undesirable behaviour. There was clear evidence to show the behaviour had been discussed with each young person individually in a planning meeting and that the resulting sanction had been discussed and evaluated with them, however, this was not reflected in the sanctions log. Some young people occasionally express their

emotions through challenging behaviour or self-injury. They say that staff look after them well and make sure they get any medical attention necessary. There is an organisational policy on the non-use of physical intervention. Where peripatetic staff have viewed behaviour as requiring a physical intervention the police have been called, such instances have been infrequent. In order to reduce the use of peripatetic staff the organisation is in the process of recruiting more permanent staff and increasing the staff complement at the home.

Recruitment practices are robust, ensuring that only those deemed suitable are employed to work in the home. Young people are actively involved in the recruitment of staff and speak positively about their contribution to the process.

Staff manage health and safety well. Routine safety checks and maintenance of fire safety, gas and electrical systems and equipment are undertaken as required. Recently young people have become involved in working alongside staff in this and are enjoying the responsibility.

## **Leadership and management**

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

There is a permanent experienced manager in post and staff are appreciative of her open, supportive and inclusive management style. The manager continues to build on the good progress noted at the last inspection, from which there were no requirements or recommendations arising. Complaints are well managed and outcomes are shared with the complainants and used to further improve practice in the home. Parents are also confident that their concerns are listened to and acted on. The manager works on shift regularly and has a good oversight of the practice in the home. There is frequent consultation with young people on a daily basis which gives them the opportunity to express their views on a range of issues. There is regular monitoring through monthly external visits and reports and a six-monthly evaluation of the service by the manager. The manager knows the strengths and weaknesses of the home and can articulate in detail her plans for the development of the service. However, the written version is insufficiently specific, does not evidence the areas for development very well nor set timescales.

The majority of social workers report that there is evidence that young people placed in the home have made good progress while living in the home. There are some concerns that on occasion there are mixed messages, both for the young people and the placing authority, about progress by young people, in particular where it is predicted but not achieved and/or sustained. Young people are supported to explore the reasons why they have not achieved what they hoped to and what additional measures they need to secure progress. For example, what needs to be done to reduce young people's anxieties about moving on from the home.

The Statement of Purpose and young people's guides are up to date and accurately reflect what the service hopes to achieve and how, including details of the therapeutic models used. Young people say that the guide 'clearly explained the



rules'.

Staff benefit from and are enthusiastic about the detailed induction and training programme which equips them to deliver good care to the young people. The programme supports the completion of the Children's Workforce Development Council induction standards, and the diploma at level three and for some staff level five. Most, but not all, staff complete the induction standards within the six month timescale.

The staff team describe the support and supervision provided by the manager as good. There is a strong emphasis on equality of opportunity for all. Staff say that they feel valued by the manager, their views and opinions are listened to and this in turn enables the staff team to provide a nurturing environment for the young people. Regular supervision and team meetings provide staff with structured formal support that enables them to successfully undertake their duties. Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. There are systems in place to address any shortfalls in staffing, but young people are not always satisfied with these arrangements. The senior management has listened and in the light of this reviewed and increased the staffing complement and are currently interviewing for these additional posts. There is a robust on call system which provides additional support when needed.

Records are well maintained and provide a good picture of the individual needs and progress of the children and young people.

## 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.