

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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Service information

Brief description of the service

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 overall aim of the service is to offer four young people the opportunity to embark on specialised educational and therapeutic training programmes within a safe, supportive and nurturing environment.

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 are making exceptional progress as a result of their placements. They are settled; enjoy staffs' company and becoming increasingly involved in various forms of therapy. Young people say they are pleased with what they are achieving and are determined to go on to having successful careers in their adult lives. Staff are instrumental in facilitating a range of opportunities for engaging young people in meaningful and purposeful activities and events in and away from the home. Young people speak extremely positively about the success of a recent holiday and their ongoing attendance at a local club.

The holistic approach to care planning ensures that these systems are personalised to young people's individual needs. The thoroughness of monitoring and reviewing these systems also means that young people's changing and developing needs are not overlooked. Young people are supported through a well-established keyworker system and the style of keyworking differs to suit young people's interests and preferences.

Young people and staff are supported through effective leadership. The Registered manager is constantly reviewing practice, while developing and empowering the staff. Relationships between young people and staff are sound. There is a genuine sense of respect and care between young people and staff and the whole team approach towards supporting young people means that young people can talk to any

member of staff not just their keyworkers.

Two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection in relation to record keeping. Recording systems in place are comprehensive and detailed but different documents are used for recording the outcomes of serious incidents and notifiable events. Therefore all of the information relevant to each incident or event is not kept together. Equally this style of recording does not give significant others and relevant agencies including the regulator a full insight to how notifiable events are managed.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that information about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. In particular, the recording of serious incidents ensuring that the action taken and outcome is recorded on the incident form and not in a separate generic document (NMS 22.5)
- ensure that records of all notifiable events related to the protection of children accommodated in the home include more details of the appropriate action taken following the incident. (NMS 24)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are appreciating the benefits of their placements and are very ambitious about their future. Staff are working with young people in developing life story books, focusing on significant events, activities and achievements during their placements. This staff say is helping young people celebrate and reflect on their achievements and progress, considering their starting points and where young people are when they leave. The emphasis placed on value, respect and inclusion creates an environment where young people learn and develop new and meaningful skills and experiences. On occasions when young people challenge or are challenged, staff do not give up hope and work tirelessly encouraging and supporting young people to believe in themselves.

The varying types of assessments and therapies young people engage in, are central to their development and emotional welfare. The vast majority of young people are committed to therapeutic intervention and staff are quick to intervene when young people are becoming disengaged. Young people have a very good understanding of healthy life styles and holistic matters relating to their health and well-being. This includes sensitive matters such as sexual health, forming positive relationships and self-care. Therapists work flexibly with staff and young people, ensuring that matters

relating to young people's health and well-being are dealt with efficiently and in a timely manner. Young people's primary health needs are well supported and all young people attend regular appointments with primary health care professionals.

Young people are making progress educationally and their future ambitions provide a strong focus for them to continue learning and achieving. All young people currently attend the registered provider's school. Most of the young people do not have a good view about the school environment and their comments are less than favourable. However, as these views are voiced, staff are proactive in addressing these with young people and the school staff to ensure that learning is not disrupted because of external influences outside of the home setting.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy the benefits of strong and trusting relationships established with the staff team. The effectiveness of these relationships enables young people to openly discuss their fears, worries and needs in a non-compromising way. Young people say they enjoy staffs' company and that they find staff approachable. Similarly, the group of young people currently living together are respectful towards each other and positive relationships are encouraged and supported through recreational activities, house meetings and informally through daily routines such as meal times. One young person commented 'Most of the time I get on with other young people here; we're doing ok.' The games room is becoming increasingly popular with young people as this provides additional space and facilities for recreation and social purposes.

Staff are very respectful towards young people's needs and committed towards helping young people overcome some very challenging and traumatising experiences encountered prior to taking up their placements. The holistic approach includes working directly with young people, professionals working within the organisation and external professionals. One external professional commented 'I cannot fault the staff for ways in which they help the young person I have placed as he (the young person) is now beginning to respond to therapy.' This example of meeting a young person's needs is indicative of how staff generally support young people through their emotions, relationships with significant others, and using therapy for restoring and building a more positive outlook on their lives.

Young people are confident in speaking out about day-to-day living matters within the home and the wider organisation. A culture of openness and freedom of speech provides opportunities for young people to raise minor grumbles or formal complaints. Evidence shows that all forms of complaints are taken very seriously and when young people are not satisfied, they access all available resources external to the organisation for seeking their desired outcome. Dialogue and reasoning with young people is direct and frank so that young people are clear about requests or matters which cannot be acted upon or taken forward. Care planning processes are

very robust and young people's involvement in these processes help them to understand the reasons for their placements and why certain restrictions or supervision arrangements are in place.

Great emphasis is placed on providing and creating a home which involves young people, giving them opportunities to explore their abilities and skills in a very constructive way. For instance, each young person has an area of responsibility such as fire safety, cleanliness and hygiene, and vehicle safety. Young people take their responsibilities seriously and work very closely with staff ensuring that their duties and responsibilities are being fulfilled. The ambience of the home is very inviting and personalised in meeting young people's needs; collectively and individually. Young people have a say and choice about facilities, furniture and other homely items. This gives young people a clear sense of ownership, equality and respect for their environment.

Extensive work is undertaken in ensuring that young people's diverse needs are met in the best possible way. This includes cultural, dietary, and religious needs. Robust risk assessments are in place for determining young people's safety and that of others when planning and engaging young people in community-based activities and events. The robustness of planning and involvement of young people is a two-way process for establishing how and where supervision of young people is needed. The diversity of these processes also means that young people are supported to reintegrate into everyday situations, enabling them to enjoy leisurely pastimes while being given the opportunities to confront their abilities to cope in different situations.

Effective arrangements are in place for ensuring that young people's contact meetings and visits with families and significant others are managed with great care and attention. The detail of planning, supervision, follow-up support for young people and recording of these vents all contribute to the success of young people restoring and enjoying valued relationships. Staffs' vigilance of young people's emotional well-being following contact helps influence the extent of therapy required. In some cases, therapy extends not only to young people but to their families.

Care planning is wide ranging and thorough. All elements of care planning are consistent with management having good oversight of young people's responses to agreed targets and therapy. Young people are very involved in commenting on their care plans and the 'core group meetings' is a recent initiative which young people are very aware of and invited to attend. This initiative places great significance on young people's general well-being and creates opportunities for key staff including therapists and key workers to evaluate outcomes for and with young people in a meaningful way.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The arrangements for keeping young people safe are good. Young people say they are and feel safe in this home. The main reasons being their relationships with staff, environmental factors such as the 'safe space' boundaries and house rules whereby young people make their whereabouts known to staff at all times.

Safeguarding procedures are implemented under detailed management and monitoring systems. Suspected or known safeguarding matters are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. Staff are kept up to date regarding best practice through regular training on safeguarding and on-going dialogue with all professionals involved with each of the young people. All parents who completed Ofsted's online surveys commented that their children are kept safe. Similarly, all young people commented that they are supported if they have any safeguarding issues. Young people know the consequences of inappropriate behaviour including the use of the internet and mobile phones. Boundaries are made very clear to young people regarding the use of social media sites, forming safe relationships and making good use of the therapy they receive to help manage their behaviours and to prevent exploitation.

Permissible forms of control, de-escalation techniques and discipline are clearly set out in organisational policies and agreed with young people and their placing authorities. Sanctions are imposed according to young people's behaviour and used in a restorative way. Young people all agree that they are aware of house rules and do not have any strong opinions about sanctions except that they are fair and appropriate. Young people's behaviour plans and risk assessments are comprehensive and tailored to their assessed needs.

Young people are confident that staff are prompt in addressing any suspicions of bullying or unacceptable behaviour. Currently, young people do not view this as an issue in the home. The house meetings are used constructively as a time for young people to 'challenge and be challenged'. This creates a safe space for young people to openly discuss their feelings, thoughts and observations of others' behaviours and to explore better ways of living together and solving their differences in a respectful and orderly way.

Young people's safety is paramount and regular checks of appliances, electrical facilities and fire safety equipment are in place and well documented. Young people know the emergency procedures and their participation in a fire drill at the time of this inspection demonstrated this. Maintenance of the home is kept up to date and all staff and young people play an equal role in reporting any faults or damages around the home. The characteristics of the home reflect young people's choices and personal tastes, all of which create a very warm and pleasant environment. Young people live in a residential area with easy access to local amenities and sport facilities.

It is extremely rare for young people to go missing. Young people are fully aware of how they can access support when they are feeling troubled or upset rather than running off from the home. One young person explained that going for a short drive in the car with staff listening to his favourite music is one way in helping him get

through difficult moments. Staff are fully aware of procedures to be followed in the event of a young person going missing from care.

Leadership and management

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

The home operates in accordance with the aims and objectives as set out in the Statement of Purpose. A children's guide is in place and a copy is given to all young people on admission.

Young people thrive in a home which is very focused on their assessed needs, while providing opportunities for their growth and development. One parent commented that their son has 'matured' since living at this home. The Registered Manager and the staff team are very insightful towards young people's needs and are constantly engaging with young people at all levels to ensure that they are happy, content and making progress. Where young people are feeling emotional and not coping well, staff allow them the space and scope to work through these feelings in a respectful and supportive way. Staff say that their work is challenging at times but always rewarding because they really enjoy working with the young people.

An experienced and suitably qualified manager is in post with the support of an established staff team. Almost half of the staff team are new in post following a period of staff moving on. Staff rotas and ratios of staff on duty at any one time are carefully planned to avoid disruption to young people's care. Young people are establishing positive relationships with the new members of staff and opportunities are in place to facilitate this. For example, proper time is allocated to new staff and young people in house meetings to establish initial relationships.

Training opportunities for the staff are wide ranging and extensive. Staff say that the training is relevant and appropriate to their work. All established staff have a level 3 qualification in working with children and young people or above. Two of the staff including the Registered Manager are work-based assessors for staff undertaking professional qualifications. The Registered Manager advised that new staff will register to undertake relevant professional qualifications on successful completion of their probationary periods. Induction processes for new staff are comprehensive and includes the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) standards. In addition to core units, the CWDC standards are tailored to give staff the underpinning knowledge of working in this specialist service. Management oversight of staff inductions is thorough including increased frequency of formal supervisions. All staff are supported through regular supervisions and annual appraisals of their work. Staff describe these systems as 'helpful' and 'supportive'. In turn this enables staff to develop the skills and competencies they require to support young people through complex and challenging situations.

Staff speak extremely highly about the support they receive from each other and the management team. External monitoring of the home takes place regularly and staff

and young people are very engaged in these processes. Reports for external monitoring visits are comprehensive, giving a broad overview of the service and measurable outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager has established a sound system for monitoring the quality of the service internally via an annual development plan and bi-annual reporting as required by regulation. Evaluations of the service are up to date and reports give clear accounts of the home's improvements and areas for development.

Young people's records are well kept with very effective systems for assessing and monitoring young people's progress. These systems provide useful data for determining ways in which to support young people in advancing their capabilities such as earning less supervised time in a safe way. One external professional commented 'I can rely on the staff for keeping me informed about the young person's safety and welfare.'

Overarching management systems include recording systems of serious incidents pertaining to young people. Records are kept confidentially on young people's files and contain detailed information about each incident. However, the outcome and details of follow-up work are usually recorded in a separate document and not on the incident record. Similarly, a reliable system is in place for notifying relevant agencies including the regulator of significant events as set out in regulation. However, these notifications do not include detailed information about risk management or action taken as a result of the event. This information is recorded in a separate document which does not always give the reader clarity about the action taken.

There were no requirements or recommendations from the last inspection.

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.