

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Simon Morley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people of either gender. The home provides care and accommodation to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties on a long-term basis.

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 living in the home are all over the age of 16 and are focussing on their further education, employment prospects and developing their independence. Staff are highly committed to providing young people with very high standards of care regardless of their individual needs. As a result, young people progress well towards living independently.

Young people's views and needs are at the heart of care practice. They contribute well to decision making about the running of the home, their care and plans for the future. Young people feel safe living at the home and learn how to keep themselves safe. Staff have a good understanding of their responsibilities and make a strong contribution to the safety of young people.

The home is managed well. The support and training staff receive ensures they are competent in their work. Young people are looked after effectively and staff make a positive difference to their lives. Good use is made of information from monitoring the quality of care, procedures and young people's progress. This contributes to how well young people progress and achieve in their lives. Young people benefit from positive outcomes compared to when they first moved into the home.

There are minor shortfalls in three areas. The quality of monitoring by the registered provider, how young people have a voice in the monitoring process and the strength of recruitment checks need improvement.

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
33 (2001)	ensure the person carrying out these visits interviews, with their consent and in private, children accommodated there, their parents and relatives. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	29/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure all people working in the home have references checked to assess their suitability, telephone enquiries are made as well as obtaining written references (NMS 16.1)
- ensure Regulation 33 reports include a scrutiny of how the home supports children to enjoy and achieve. (Statutory Guidance Volume 5, paragraph 3.12)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are making significant improvements towards becoming young adults and moving to more independent accommodation. All young people progress well their education, move onto further education courses or explore other options to continue with their achievements. Young people's education attendance is generally good. They also continue to achieve well, developing basic skills and undertaking vocational studies in preparation for future employment.

Young people benefit from the opportunities to develop their independence skills. They learn to manage their money, shop, cook, complete housework and be responsible for making and attending their own appointments. Young people need minimum support when they go out and are able to travel using public transport. Young people have identified places they want to move to and are working successfully towards more independent living.

Progress varies depending on individual young people's needs particularly with regard to healthy diets, quitting smoking and attending all important appointments. However, all young people explore personal and health issues with staff, such as relationships, safety, sex, alcohol and substance misuse. This helps young people

develop their knowledge and understanding about healthy lifestyles. They learn better personal safety as they get older. In comparison to their needs and starting points on admission to the home young people are safe and well.

Young people's confidence and self-esteem improves while living at the home. They develop new skills, support each other and enjoy more independence. Young people have a strong say in the running of the home, their care and decision-making which helps them become more responsible and mature.

Young people benefit from being able to develop and maintain good levels of contact with relatives despite difficult and complex relationships with family members. This helps young people maintain a network of family support.

Quality of care

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

Staff want the best for young people, they are passionate about helping them do well regardless of their different needs. Staff commented 'we never give up trying'. This is reflected in their caring, persistent efforts to support young people. This helps young people overcome difficult issues such as relationship problems, risks of exploitation and reluctance to engage in education. As a result young people develop their confidence and have more active, fulfilling lives.

Staff have helped young people receive home tuition, provide educational resources and their support helps young people to sit their final exams. Staff have developed relationships with other local agencies and use this to help young people explore different educational options. Similarly, staff are very effective in ensuring young people benefit from a range of health services to promote their individual health needs. This includes counselling, sexual health advice and substance misuse. Staff are committed to ensuring young people have high levels of support to attending key appointments.

Staff understand young people very well and have used their skills to develop excellent relationships with them. Young people commented, 'there is always someone here I can talk to, staff really try and help me'. The key working system provides young people with very good opportunities to talk to staff about any concerns and key issues in their lives. In addition, there are regular residents meetings that young people enjoy attending and take part in organising. These consist of lively debates about aspects of the home that are important to young people such as activities, holidays, food and clothing. Young people have a very good say, both on a daily basis and at fortnightly meetings, about what happens in their home.

As well as listening effectively to young people, staff keep young people at the centre of care practice through high quality, thorough, detailed individual care plans. These provide an outstanding account of how young people's needs are met and prioritised. Regular progress reports have improved since the last inspection clearly showing the

achievements young people have made. Young people are fully included in the writing of their contribute to their plans. The excellent approach by staff is considerate and thoughtful in helping young people to understand their own needs and how to progress further.

Staff have developed a very relaxed, comfortable atmosphere which helps young people to feel confident about who they are. Young people enjoy a very homely, welcoming environment which is a safe place for them to mature and develop into independent young adults

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff work very effectively with young people and other professionals to help young people feel safe and protect them from harm. Young people feel safe at home and learn to understand the risks of going missing from the home, being exploited and risky relationships. Staff encourage young people to keep out of danger and have had a good impact on helping young people reduce behaviour that is risky to their welfare. Good joint working with other statutory agencies has significantly improved young people's safety, in particular with regard to risks of being exploited.

Care planning includes comprehensive risk management focussed on the individual needs and lifestyles of each young person. Staff follow risk management guidance thoroughly in promoting young people's safety. This allows young people to take reasonable risks as part of their progress to independence with a strong safety net of staff support. Staff know and understand their safeguarding responsibilities. These are robustly fulfilled and any concerns about a young person's safety are correctly reported to other agencies. When young people are absent from the home, staff are successful in ensuring their safe return. Levels of support young people receive have led to a significant decline in the frequency they are missing.

Staff are very good at responding to any negative and anti-social behaviour. They used planned strategies and have developed individual incentives for each young person. Their effective approach avoids the need for physical intervention and institutional sanctions. This has a strong impact on the homely atmosphere and positive relationships between staff and young people.

All staff employed in the home are subject to appropriate vetting to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. There are minor shortfalls in this system with regards to the thoroughness with which references are checked.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of the home is effective and focusses on improving the quality of care and outcomes for young people. This is underpinned by rigorous internal monitoring by the manager and regular checks made by the registered provider. This contributes to the exceptional quality of care and positive outcomes young people experience. Shortfalls do exist in the monitoring by the registered provider with regard to how well quality reports evaluate young people's individual journeys and ensuring their views are included. This compromises the effectiveness of registered provider's ability to oversee the management of the home. This is compensated by the robustness of the manager's own monitoring and the strong voice young people have in their care.

Staff are supported well through regular supervision and a programme of on-going training. Staff value their supervision and supportive teamwork, which provide them with good opportunities for learning and reflective practice. Along with up-to-date guidance, this helps staff develop their skills and knowledge to ensure young people benefit from positive outcomes in their lives.

All senior staff complete management training which is reflected in how organised the team are. There are good systems of delegation with staff being responsible for key areas. This contributes to a well-run home with competent staff who work in an effective, caring and person centred way. Young people benefit from a stable, experienced staff team that can meet their needs consistently and with clear boundaries.

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.