

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nick Veysey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned by a private company. It provides care and accommodation for two children and young people with emotional and/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 **good**.

This is the children's home's first inspection since it was registered with Ofsted. It continues to meet the requirements of registration. The manager and staff provide young people with a good quality of care in a safe and supportive environment. Young people are achieving positive outcomes in all aspects of their welfare and development, including in education, their personal relationships and their health and emotional well-being.

Young people are positive about how well they are being looked after. They have trusting relationships with staff. They feel that staff are interested in their lives, take them seriously and try their best to help them and keep them safe. Social workers and schools are also positive about the staff's commitment to young people and the standard of care and support they provide.

Staff are fully committed to promoting young people's welfare. They have a detailed understanding of young people's needs, circumstances and risks to their safety. They contribute fully to the planning for young people's care, support and management of risk. They work effectively in partnership with young people, social workers, and support services to ensure that young people are safe and get the help, guidance and advice they need on a daily basis.

Staff enable young people to play an active role in decisions about their lives. Their child-centred approach ensures the support young people receive is personalised and tailored to meet their individual and diverse needs. The manager and staff have also developed positive relationships with young people's families, and appropriately

involve them in young people's care and decisions affecting their lives. They have supported young people to build positive relationships with key people in their lives.

The management and leadership arrangements are strong. The manager is focused on achieving positive outcomes for young people. The manager uses monitoring systems to measure young people's progress, and identify the strengths of the home and any areas for development; including the development of staff's skills and knowledge through training.

Overall, the home shows a good capacity for continued improvement, but there are areas for further development. The monitoring reports completed by the provider do not always include the views of young people about the home. Also, written records do not always fully evaluate young people's development to provide a clearer insight to their needs, help young people reflect and understand their experiences, and show how effectively the home is making a difference to young people's lives.

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 children are regularly involved in contributing to the provider's monitoring of the operation of the home and quality of care, and their views and any concerns are clearly recorded and seriously taken into account (NMS 21.1)
- develop written records about children to include more detailed evaluation of children's experiences and progress to gain a better understanding of children's lives, help children reflect on their experiences and development, and identify the areas for further support. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are making very good progress in all aspects of their lives, such as in their education, health and managing their feelings. There is a significant reduction in behaviour that places them at risk of harm. They have built strong attachments with staff, and have positive relationships with their family and friends. Young people feel that their life is better since they moved into the children's home. Social workers and schools feel that young people have made important progress. A teacher reported, 'the young person has never been as settled, his medical condition has never been as well under control and he has re-engaged with his friends. The improvement I have seen in the young person's health and emotional well-being is exceptional.'

Young people are growing in confidence and feel able to express their wishes and

feelings constructively. They now feel much more able to take part in meetings and in decisions about own lives; for example playing an active role in their review meetings and meetings at school. They have developed maturity and emotional resilience and, as a result are coping better with some of the challenges they face; for example, in personal relationships and managing feelings.

Young people enjoy good health and improved health outcomes. They enjoy healthier diets and plenty of physical exercise. They understand about the importance of healthy lifestyles and key health risks. As a result, they make positive health choices that improve their own health. Young people are taking more responsibility for their own health needs and personal care, including managing long-standing medical conditions and their own medication extremely well. Although at times they struggle to manage their anxieties, they feel more able to let staff know when they need some help and know what will help them, most of the time.

Young people's participation in education has significantly improved since moving in. Their attendance and motivation has improved and they are achieving qualifications, including A to C passes at GCSE. Young people have returned to school post-16 to work towards further qualifications that will help them to follow their chosen careers, including working with animals. Although, they sometimes find education a challenge, they are taking the opportunities available to develop their knowledge and skills, pursue their talents and gain qualifications.

Young people are also motivated to develop their social and life skills. They enjoy taking part in activities in the community, in particular ice hockey, and spending time with friends. They accept good advice that is supporting them to make positive and suitable personal relationships, and helping them to develop their self-esteem and confidence. They are successfully taking on more responsibilities for themselves, as are appropriate to their age and understanding. They routinely plan, shop and cook meals, and are building confidence in their abilities.

Young people enjoy seeing their families regularly and this is helping them to improve and maintain positive relationships with the important people in their lives. A young person said, 'I am getting on better with my mum, it helps us both not to have to be with each other all the time.' Staff work really hard to ensure that young people find seeing their families is a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. Staff are very aware that young people and families sometimes may find seeing each other stressful, and make sure they are suitably and sensitively supported. They have creatively facilitated contact when young people and their families had not been getting on too well, including taking everyone out for a tea, to try and sort the problems out by having a good time together.

Quality of care

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

Staff promote young people's welfare and enable them to achieve better outcomes. They provide young people with a consistently good standard of care in a supportive

and calm atmosphere. Young people live in a pleasant and comfortable family house. It is decorated, furnished and maintained to a very high standard and meets young people's individual needs, personalities and tastes. Young people said, 'I feel chilled here and can focus on my hobbies.' Young people have a strong sense of belonging. A social worker said 'the young person is proud of where he lives and feels safe there.'

Staff care about young people as individuals and clearly enjoy spending time with them. They have aspirations for young people to do well, regardless of the challenges young people's needs and circumstances may present. The staff have developed trusting and positive relationships with young people. They make every effort to find out what is important to individual young people, understanding their needs, worries, culture, circumstances, talents and interests.

Young people are very positive about how well they are being looked after. They feel that staff are interested their lives and concerned about the welfare. A young person said 'I get on well with staff, I can talk to them, they listen to what I have to say and try to help me.' Social workers are also very positive about the quality of care and staff's ability to meet young people's needs and make a positive difference to their lives.

Staff place young people's welfare, wishes and feelings at the centre of their practice. Young people's views and wishes significantly influence the running of the home and the decisions affecting their lives, including what they have to eat, what they do in their spare time, how their bedroom is decorated, and plans for their future. They feel that the staff always listen and take their views seriously. Young people feel able to make complaints and that their concerns are thoroughly investigated and sorted out.

Thorough planning and assessment ensures that the home is suitable to meet individual young people's needs and staff have the expertise to effectively support each young person and secure positive outcomes for them. Young people know and agree with their placement plans. The plans are detailed, set out the objectives for the placement, young people's individual needs, risks and the support required to promote and safeguard their welfare.

Staff have a detailed knowledge of the young people they work with ensuring that young people receive very good individual support and guidance. Staff put young people's placement plans into practice effectively. Staff's day-to-day practice ensures that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their diverse personal needs. The staff routinely monitor and review young people's plans, taking into account any changes to make sure they continue to meet young people's needs. This includes consulting with young people, parents and the key people supporting young people, to make sure that young people are getting the right support. Staff have strong and effective working relationships with parents, schools and health support services to promote young people's development. The manager has developed very positive relationships with parents; he works inclusively to enable them to continue to play a significant part in their children's lives.

The staff actively promote young people's education and are successful in developing young people's opportunities to learn and achieve. They ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education and attendance. Young people have good access to plenty of books, art materials, games, computers and other educational resources. The staff have established strong links with education providers. They work effectively to sort out problems at school and challenge any barriers to young people's full participation in education. Staff also help young people to look for work experience that will be helpful to their careers; for example voluntary work at an animal shelter.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. They have very good access to a full range of health services. The staff have a very good understanding of young people's specific health and emotional needs and ensure their needs are met on a daily basis. They provide excellent advice on health issues, including diet, exercise, personal care and relationships. They also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling poorly or have an accident. They support and enable young people to manage long-standing medical conditions. Staff are suitable training in a variety of health issues relevant to the needs of individual young people. They have established strong links with specialist nurses that provide expertise and guidance in managing specific health issues. The arrangements for managing medication are safe and effective.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and are protected from harm. Staff consistently apply effective safe caring practices to promote vulnerable young people's welfare. They give young people's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. A social worker said, 'staff are really concerned about the young person's welfare and are committed to keeping him safe.' They know exactly what they need to do when they have concerns about young people and take decisive action to protect young people. The manager and staff dealt with a serious incident where young people were at risk of harm in a calm and effective way. They took suitable action to protect young people and ensured that the immediate risks were addressed. They worked exceptionally well with the emergency services in the best interests of young people and contributed to securing a positive outcome.

The manager and staff have strong and effective relationships with safeguarding agencies and the police and report to them all serious incidents that may impact on young people's safety. They are good at sharing relevant information with other the agencies to identify specific risks; and actively contribute to the development of effective plans to keep individual young people safe. They ensure comprehensive risk assessments and plans for young people's safety are keep up-to-date to take into account changes to the level of risk and young people's circumstances. They consistently put risk management plans into practice and fully address young

people's needs. Staff work effectively and sensitively with young people to promote their personal safety and positive behaviour, including helping young people to manage their feelings and worries constructively. The staff have a very clear understanding of young people's particular vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and emotional maturity. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at home and in the community.

Young people do not go missing. Staff are very good at keeping in touch with young people when they are out and always go to collect them to make sure they get home safely. The staff effectively balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development.

Young people's behaviour is excellent. They benefit from a calm and friendly environment where positive behaviour is actively promoted through praise and rewards. Young people feel fairly treated. The staff apply reasonable and consistent boundaries to help young people understand what is expected of them. The behaviour management records are clearly written, detailed and provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures used to promote positive behaviour. This information has helped the manager and staff understand what measures work best for individual young people.

Staff have an excellent understanding of the factors that contribute to young people becoming upset. They actively involve young people in working out the best way to manage their feelings and risks to their welfare. Young people let staff know what upsets and worries them, what helps them to feel safe and calm down; for example staff follow a young person's request for when upset. This helps the young person to deal with thoughts and feelings positively.

The selection and recruitment of staff has been thorough to make sure young people are protected and staff have the skills, experiences, qualifications and motivation to work with vulnerable young people. The provider also makes suitable checks on any agency staff working at the children's home.

Young people are protected from any hazards by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is currently on maternity leave. The provider has appointed a suitably qualified and experienced person to manage the children's home in the manager's absence. The new manager has applied to be registered with Ofsted and his application is currently being considered. The new manager provides leadership and strong management. He ensures that the children's home runs efficiently and consistently with its objectives and in the best interests of young people. The culture

and ethos of the home reflects his child-centred approach and commitment to promoting and safeguarding young people's welfare.

Young people are looked after by enthusiastic, skilled and compassionate people. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people. The changing needs of young people has meant the staffing levels increased quickly. This has resulted in the occasional use of agency staff to work alongside permanent staff. This has been done with care and successfully maintains the continuity of care for young people and ensures their attachments with important people are not disrupted. Staff's skills and interests complement each other and match young people's needs well, for example young people's interests in sport and physical activities.

The manager and staff have opportunities to discuss their performance and development with a manager through regular good quality professional supervision. The staff feel very well supported by the manager. Staff are supported to manage their own feelings and responses arising from working with young people who show difficult emotional issues.

Team meetings take place routinely to provide staff with the chance, as a group, to review and reflect young people's progress and needs, the running of the home and how best to develop and improve the standard of care and support. The staff have opportunities for good quality training to develop their individual skills and knowledge relevant to the young people they are caring for.

The manager makes good use of internal monitoring to inform his development plan, understand the strengths of the home and identify areas for development, such as placement plans and the need for further training for staff to enhance their skills and knowledge relevant to the particular needs of individual young people.

The provider visits the home each month to scrutinise the performance of the home. However, the visitor has not spoken with young people about their views and feelings about the quality of care. This limits the ability of the visitor to understand young people's experiences in the home and identify areas for improvements important to young people.

Young people's written records provide a detailed picture of their progress and experiences. Their records provide information that contributes to the plans for their care. However, the records do not always include a detailed evaluation of experiences and progress. This analysis is important to gain a better understanding of young people's lives, help them reflect on their experiences and development, identify the areas for further support, and show the difference the home is making to young people's lives.

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.