

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is one of a number of children's homes run by a private organisation. This home provides medium- to long-term care for up to four young people of either sex, between the ages of 11 and 17 years.

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 receive care and support that enables them to make good progress and achieve positive outcomes. They all have detailed care plans in place. However, some young people say that these plans are a bit confusing due to their length. Care plans are discussed in key worker sessions and this helps young people to understand them. All young people are very positive about the levels of care and support they receive. They feel that staff treat them with respect and their views are listened too. Where it is not possible to act upon their wishes, this is explained to them. One young person said 'I have really made a lot of progress since living here.' Another young person said, 'I have settled in here really well, it's a good place to live.'

Young people benefit from good support with their education, health and preparation for independence. Educational attendance has significantly improved for the young people since their admission to the home. Attendance at health care appointments has also improved and this helps young people to have overall good health outcomes.

Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of safeguarding and child protection. Although there have been some incidences of young people missing from home ; staff work closely with police and placing social workers to minimise and reduce this.

The management and leadership of the home is good. Young people benefit from a continuity of staffing who they know and feel supported by. All staff receive regular

training and support to ensure that their knowledge and practice is current. The manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home to promote good outcomes for young people. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and is proactive in addressing any shortfalls. However, a shortfall in the recording of physical interventions in relation to promoting confidentiality has been identified at this inspection. A further recommendation has been made in relation to young people being able to fully understand their placement plans and to ensure that the documentation from statutory reviews is received in a timely manner.

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 records maintain confidentiality of all yp. This is in relation to the records maintained of physical interventions. (NMS 22.3)
- ensure that children understand the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care (NMS 25.1)
- ensure that the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of placement plans are recorded on the child's file (NMS 25.8).

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress from their initial starting point. They all have detailed placement plans in place that outline their level of care and support needs. They benefit from being supported by an established and consistent staff team, the vast majority of whom hold a recognised qualification in child care.

Young people benefit from having positive relationships with staff and say that they are able to discuss things with them. This enables them to reflect on their experiences and develop skills for their future.

Individual health care needs are clearly identified. Some young people, prior to moving into the home, had poor attendance at health care appointments. They are supported to understand the importance of good health and to attend health care appointments. This enables the health care needs to be appropriately met.

Education is effectively promoted and attendance at school and college for all young people has increased. Positive school reports reflect the overall progress and achievements that young people have made. This enables them to plan for their future academic choices and plans for leaving education.

Young people learn skills for independence during their stay at the home. They are

supported with budgeting, shopping, preparing meals and planning for their future.

Young people maintain contact with family and friends and understand why any restrictions may be imposed. They benefit from appropriate support to address any anxieties or issues arising from contact arrangements.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from being cared for by an experienced and consistent staff team who have the necessary skills and qualifications to promote positive outcomes. Young people speak highly of the staff and they say that they have good relationships with them all. They feel that staff respect them and care about them. One young person said 'staff always provide me with good support and they care about me.' Another young person said 'I feel happy living here.'

All young people have comprehensive care plans in place that detail levels of care and support required. These plans are kept under review and this enables any changes to care needs to be clearly identified and addressed. However, some of the care plans are very detailed and some young people say that they have not been involved in the development of these plans, although they say that they discuss them with staff sometimes during key worker sessions. Although this enables young people to have an understanding of their plans, it does not ensure that they are involved in all aspects of planning of their care. Staff ensure that weekly updates of progress and events are provided to placing social workers. One social worker said 'the home provides weekly reports of the activities, progress and individual outcomes for the young person. This enables me to have a good overview of how well the young person has settled in and the progress that they are making.'

Young people are supported to attend their Looked After Children reviews. The staff provide comprehensive minutes of progress made to these review meetings. However, there is a delay in the home receiving copies of the formal review minutes and this does not ensure that the home has the necessary formal information following reviews. Although the home takes steps to receive these, this is not consistently recorded.

Young people live in a comfortable and healthy environment. They are supported to lead a healthy lifestyle. This includes taking part in healthy activities, eating a healthy balanced diet and taking responsibility for their health. Staff provide information and support about the effects of smoking and substance misuse. This includes access to specialist services in relation to this. All young people are registered with appropriate health care professionals and staff provide support to young people to attend appointments. Any changes to health care needs are recorded to ensure that the appropriate support is provided. These measures contribute to the promotion of good health for young people.

Young people attend education either at school or college. Staff maintain good links

with education staff to enable them to effectively support the educational needs of young people. The attendance and educational progress is monitored and additional educational support provided to ensure that young people achieve their optimum educational level.

The home is a large house that provides appropriate accommodation for the young people. It is situated in a residential area with access to local shops, leisure and recreational facilities. The home is maintained to a good standard and young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms by choosing their décor and accessories. They are also consulted about the communal areas of the home. One young person said 'I have discussed my colour scheme for my bedroom and we are planning to decorate shortly.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they feel safe and are supported to stay safe. Staff have all undertaken safeguarding training and are proactive in maintaining the safety and well-being of the young people. They are aware of the signs and symptoms of abuse and have the knowledge to act upon any issues raised. Their practice is underpinned by a range of safe caring and child protection policies and procedures, which reflect up to date information.

Risk assessments are in place for each young person. These are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they reflect the current individual needs of the young people. Any changes to these are clearly recorded and staff are informed in handover and during the full weekly staff meeting. These measures ensure that individual risks are minimised and appropriately managed.

The home has a range of procedures to follow in the event of a young person missing from home. Staff ensure that they make every attempt to contact or locate the young person. Although there have been some missing from home episodes for some young people, there has been a significant reduction in these since the young people have moved to this home. Positive relationships with other agencies, including the police and placing authority social workers ensure that the home works in collaboration with these agencies to maintain the safety and well-being of young people.

Young people say that they all get on together well and there are no issues with bullying. They are confident that if there were any concerns regarding this then they would be able to speak with staff and it would be addressed appropriately. Bullying is also discussed in young people's meetings and this ensures that young people are fully aware that bullying is not acceptable at any time.

Young people have individual behaviour management plans in place that detail how their behaviours will be supported. The home focusses on positive rewards systems to promote positive behaviours. Where sanctions are implemented, these are

recorded and the young people are asked to record their views. If they decline to do so this is recorded. Physical intervention is rarely used. In the event of this taking place, a record is maintained. However, some recordings are made on the same page as the previous record. Young people are requested to record their views within the book and could have access to a record of another young person. This does not ensure that at all times, confidentiality is adhered to.

Stability of staffing at the home means that since the last inspection there has only been one change to the staff team. The home follows robust recruitment and selection processes to ensure that when new staff are recruited to the home, appropriate information is gathered, including references and disclosure and barring checks undertaken. These measures contribute to maintaining safety of young people.

The home is physically safe and secure. There are suitable health and safety procedures in place, building and fire risk assessments. Regular health and safety checks are undertaken by staff to ensure that the home is safe. In addition, all staff and young people take part in regular fire drills to ensure that they know how to leave the building safely in the event of a fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a registered manager in post with the necessary qualifications, experience and skills to provide effective management and oversight of the home. He is supported in his role by a deputy manager who takes responsibility for the home in the absence of the manager. This ensures that the home has appropriate management arrangements in place at all times.

The home has a Statement of Purpose in place. This provides an overview of the aims and objectives of the home. This document is updated on a regular basis and a copy is provided to placing social workers and other interested parties. Young people are provided with a children's guide that explains what it is like living at the home. Young people say that they find this information useful.

The vast majority of the staff hold an appropriate qualification in Caring for Children and Young people. New staff are in the process of undertaking this training. The staff have also undertaken a range of additional training, including up dated safeguarding, missing from care, child sexual exploitation, self-harm, and mental health training. An on-going training and development programme is in place for all staff. This ensures that staff have current knowledge to inform their practice and to promote the welfare of young people.

All staff receive regular supervision and have an annual appraisal. Supervision sessions are held on a planned formal basis but in addition, informal supervision is provided. Weekly full staff meetings also provide an opportunity for group discussions and peer support. These measures ensure that staff are supported within

their role and provide continuity of support to the young people.

The manager undertakes monthly quality assurance monitoring of the service to identify any shortfalls in the service and the strategies to implement to address this. Bi-annual reports are also completed to demonstrate progress of the service and the outcomes for young people. They also identify areas for the staff to focus on in the coming six months. Views of young people, placing social workers and parents are sought and contribute to these reports. Appropriate action is taken to ensure that any shortfalls identified by the monitoring systems are effectively addressed. This manager also ensures that any recommendations or requirements made at inspection are acted upon and addressed within agreed timescales.

All young people have individual case files. These are kept securely within a locked office and provide a clear overview of the young person and the progress that they have made.

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.