

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanna Heller
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately owned and provides placements for children and young people on behalf of local authorities. The home offers care and accommodation for four children and young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities.

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 make good individual progress within the nurturing environment. Young people rate the home as good to excellent and say, 'Staff care about me and know what's best for me'.

Parents say that care provided is of a high standard and rate the home as good to excellent. Placing authorities say the home provides high quality care to the young people they place. Placing authorities' comment on how staff are wholly committed to young people and stick with them through the difficult times. The manager maintains good communication with parents and placing authorities, ensuring young people remain at the centre of care delivered.

Young people make good individual progress from their starting points. Young people feel safe and are safe. Young people very rarely go missing from care. Whilst some continue to smoke, other risky behaviours are not engaged in. Relationships between staff and young people are positive and young people are able to talk to staff about things which worry them. Behaviour management within the home is strong with clear and consistent boundaries and this enables young people to learn to self-regulate their behaviours. This means that the use of sanctions and restraint is minimal.

Young people are consulted on every aspect of their day to day lives. Issues of conflict are addressed and staff are vigilant to the dynamics within the home. Placements are well planned which means that no inappropriate placements are

made. Staff are guided on how to support young people through good placement and care planning processes.

Although young people's individual needs are well met, there are some shortfalls in record keeping.

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
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in schedule 3 relating to that child. In particular; a copy of the placement plan prepared by the placing authority (Regulation 28(1))	21/05/2014
34 (2001)	ensure that the system established for monitoring and improving the quality of care provides for consultation with young people accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. In particular; ensure that the report does not contain children's names and personal information. (Regulation 34 (2) & (3))	19/06/2014

Recommendations

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

- implement a proportionate approach to risk assessment. In particular; ensure risk assessments are accurate and maintained up to date. (NMS 4.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The home provides young people with a stable, secure and happy environment in which they can grow and develop. Young people make good individual progress in important areas such as, education, self regulation of behaviour and development of independence skills. Young people's experiences of the home are positive and they have made good individual progress. Attachments quickly develop between young people and the staff who nurture them to develop their emotional resilience.

The building provides young people with spacious accommodation that meets their needs. Each young person has their own personalised bedroom which they are able to lock and keep private. The home is welcoming and provides young people with a homely environment in which to grow.

Young people maintain appropriate key peer and family relationships according to their wishes. Young people and staff enjoy positive relationships with each other. Young people are consulted daily on the running of the home and how day-to-day decisions are made.

Young people are healthy and are supported to be aware of how to maintain healthy lifestyles. Some young people do continue to smoke despite good awareness of the health risks. Young people, however, do not go missing or take drugs. Young people are supported to develop self-care and independence skills to prepare them for their life after they leave.

Most young people have made significant improvement in their commitment to education and are progressing well at school and college. However, a small minority of young people have been unable to maintain these placements and refuse to engage in education, training or work. Young people enjoy regular activities, such as, going to the gym, riding bicycles, fishing and playing pool.

Young people benefit from individualised child-focused care. Young people enjoy living at the home and grade the home as very good.

Quality of care

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

Staff ensure that living in the home makes a real difference for young people, enabling them to experience a stable environment where they are able to grow and flourish. Staff changes are minimal. This means that young people are able to develop strong relationships with staff which, in turn, helps to develop their emotional resilience. Young people say that staff are always there for them and have the time to listen. Young people, placing authorities and families rate the home as good to excellent.

Staff consult young people on all aspects of their lives and provide highly child focused care and support. Staff assist young people to understand their personal histories, and how this affects them. They are flexible in responding to young people's needs and reflect on how young people's life experience may impact on how they perceive the world around them.

The implementation of constant and effective boundaries within a nurturing environment has enabled young people to develop greater maturity and self-regulation of their behaviour. Improved maturity and the development of interpersonal skills has, for some young people and their families, had an immensely

positive effect. For example, one parent reflected that their relationship with their child had significantly improved as a result of this.

Young people benefit from well trained and competent staff. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring good outcomes for young people and this has meant that the levels of risk taking and antisocial behaviour are very low. For example, young people rarely go missing, are not taking drugs nor are they involved in criminal activity.

Placements are well planned which means that no inappropriate placements are made. Staff support young people to have a positive end of placement experience and are sensitive to the emotional well being of young people. Some young people who have moved on continue to keep in touch. Staff are guided on how to support young people through good placement and care planning processes. The manager ensures that detailed care plans are developed from the local authority placement plan. A copy of the local authority placement plan was missing for one young person, however, the manager stated this had only very recently gone missing. The impact of the missing placement plan is significantly reduced as the young person's needs are well known to staff. The home's 'my plan' document covers all areas of individual young people's strengths, needs, identity and goals, it is detailed and enables staff to effectively support the young people.

The majority of young people have good school or college attendance and are progressing well. Staff maintain good links with schools and colleges and are committed to supporting young people meet their full potential. Where young people fail to engage in education staff are proactive at seeking out alternative learning and work placement opportunities.

Regular discussion regarding current affairs and events challenges young people to gain a wider awareness of the world. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to utilise this improved awareness to engage in activities that have a positive impact. For example, young people recently held a coffee morning where they successfully raised money for the Syrian refugee crisis.

Staff encourage young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle and young people enjoy riding their bicycles and undertaking regular workouts at the local gym. Staff support young people to make positive choices through regular and effective key work sessions. However, some young people continue to make poor choices regarding smoking despite awareness of the health risks.

The home is appropriately located, spacious and homely.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe, secure and well cared for. Young people say they like living at the home and that they like the staff. Staff relationships with young people are

sensitive and caring. Young people are developing trusting relationships with the staff, who they value. An independent advocate visits the home, this means that young people have someone outside of the home to raise any concerns with should they wish. Young people also feel able to raise any issues of concern with the manager, secure in the knowledge it will be addressed.

Families and professionals have confidence in the service to effectively safeguard and protect young people. One parent commented, 'I don't worry when he's there. I know they all care about him'.

Young people have lived at the home as a group for over 18 months and whilst issues of conflict have arisen staff are attentive to managing conflict within the group, and remain vigilant to any signs of bullying. This ensures that addressing and preventing bullying remains high on the agenda.

Young people know the behavioural expectations and rules, and staff enforce these rules fairly. As a result of clear boundaries and expectations young people's behaviour has improved, and sanctions and restraint are rarely used. The well trained staff are clear on the threshold for restraint and only use physical intervention when this threshold is met. Staff find that discussions regarding consequences and choices are more effective with this group of young people. Where sanctions have been applied these have been in relation to smoking and unsafe behaviour in the car. The manager monitors the appropriately detailed sanctions and restraints records in order to identify any emerging patterns and trends. Positive behaviour is encouraged through the use of praise and rewards. Recognition for achievement, whether educational or personal, is regularly given.

One-to-one discussions take place regarding making positive choices, sexual relationships and about keeping safe. This has had a positive impact on young people who say, 'Staff care for us and know what's best for us.' Risk-taking behaviours are minimal and young people rarely go missing from care. When they do go missing staff are proactive and act in accordance with local protocols.

Staff are guided by detailed risk assessments and management plans. However these risk assessments are not always maintained to ensure they are accurate and up to date. For example, one risk assessment stated the wrong age for the young person and specific levels of risk stated did not correlate with other information. Furthermore, the assessment referred to daily room searches which ceased some time ago. Inaccurate documentation has the potential to mean that staff are not suitably clear about the level of risk posed. The impact on this occasion, however, is minimised by a constant and familiar staff team who have good awareness of the young person's individual needs.

The manager has developed positive relationships with the local police who visit the home to provide guidance both to staff and young people on key issues. Strong multi-agency partnership working ensures that any significant incidents and safeguarding concerns are managed appropriately.

The manager ensures good systems are in place to ensure the safety and security of the building. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice.

Leadership and management

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

This is a suitably resourced and well managed home. Staff are led by a committed and enthusiastic management team. Young people, parents and placing authorities rate the home as good to excellent and outcomes for young people are good.

Little turnover occurs in the staff team, most of whom have worked at the home for a number of years and this ensures continuity for young people. Staff and managers display a strong commitment to ensuring young people have the best life outcomes possible.

Staff are well trained and competent. Staff have benefitted from training in core areas, such as first aid, safeguarding, restraint and medication. Further relevant training such as secure base is planned for the next few months.

Staff feel well supported and nurtured by the manager. They demonstrate reflective practice and effective case discussions form part of regular team meetings.

The manager ensures key information about the home is made available to young people through the young people's guide. Records management within the home is generally strong, however, there are some instances when records do not fully evidence care provided, or are not sufficiently accurate. For example, one young person's risk assessment was not kept accurate and up to date. One young person's case file did not contain a copy of the local authority placement plan. Missing or inaccurate information has the potential to prevent staff having full awareness of young people's needs. Furthermore, this may impact on young people's understanding of their time in the home should they wish to access their records in the future. The impact of this is, however, minimised by a strong core team of staff who are aware of the young people's needs.

Parents and other stakeholders highlight that staff are strong at working in partnership, ensuring the child remains the central focus of all discussions and plans. The home is well staffed, enabling individualised and child-focused care. Staffing is deployed flexibly according to occupancy levels and to ensure the needs of the young people are well met.

Staff maintain positive relationships with the local community and no complaints regarding standards of care within the home have been received. The manager notifies all significant events to the relevant authorities and takes appropriate action following the incident.

The manager has ensured that all recommendations set at the previous inspection

have been met. The manager has a clear vision for the home. However the quality of care review, whilst highly detailed, does not clearly identify how the service can improve. Furthermore, whilst staff are strong at seeking the views of young people and partner agencies, these reviews are not utilised to fully understand the strengths and areas for growth within the service.

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.