

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Catherine Honey
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The main house can accommodate two young people and the cottage annex on the other side of the driveway can accommodate one.

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 benefit from this service which delivers consistently good quality of care. Young people with complex needs have developed good relationships and attachments with staff. The staff team provide young people with acceptance and nurturing. Staff are consistent in their approach with young people and create a pleasant, warm and friendly atmosphere in the home. Young people make very positive progress while living at the home.

Safeguarding processes protect young people and staff have a sound understanding of safeguarding. The manager of the home is highly experienced; providing clear leadership and support to staff. Staff are well supported and hold young people in high regard. The management team have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. They have plans in place to ensure continual development, which underpins positive outcomes for young people. Young people, families and placing authorities who participated in the inspection provided positive feedback.

Some shortfalls were identified during the inspection; however they do not impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people. Although there is regular consultation with young people, parents and stakeholders, reports submitted to Ofsted do not reflect this consultation. In addition, the home's Statement of Purpose requires further review to ensure it contains all relevant information. Staff receive comprehensive training however would benefit from further training in relation to young people's specific needs. The policy in relation to electronic monitoring devices requires revision. Young people's bedroom carpets require replacement and some

young people are unable to lock their bedroom doors. Records of restraint are not recorded in a tamper-proof way.

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
34 (2001)	ensure the system for reviewing the quality of care provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3))	07/02/2014
5 (2001)	keep under review and revise the statement of purpose. (Regulation 5a)	07/02/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting (NMS 18.1)
- revise the written policy that sets out how electronic monitoring devices should be used, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10.5)
- ensure children's privacy is appropriately protected. This is in relation to young people being able to lock their bedroom doors (NMS 3.7)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well-maintained and decorated. This is in relation to bedroom carpets (NMS 10.3)
- ensure any measure of control, discipline or restraint is recorded in a volume kept for this purpose. This is in relation to records being made in formats that cannot be tampered with after the event. (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.91)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Some young people have made excellent progress over the last year and have

turned their lives around. A professional described one young person's progress as 'phenomenal'. Young people who are new to the home settle quickly and make positive relationships with staff. Other young people are making consistent progress; are attending education and working towards independence goals.

Young people establish particularly close and trusting relationships with staff. Through these they grow in self-confidence and are better able to deal with difficult and challenging emotions when they arise. As a result young people's behaviour has improved; they experience better self-esteem and work toward a positive future.

All young people attend education and are achieving well. For young people who are new to placement, they are eager to get started at school. Others are engaged in further education and have positive ideas and high aspirations for their future careers.

Young people achieve good health outcomes and recognise themselves what they need to maintain good health, for example, by attending the gym. Young people who previously engaged in risk-taking activity have stopped this behaviour. Young people engage with staff and other professionals to better understand their emotional health. Consequently, they make positive decisions about their lifestyles, based on good levels of understanding and knowledge.

The importance of contact and of building relationships is given high priority by the home. Contact arrangements are supported by staff who support young people to develop a positive personal identity and sustain attachments. Some young people have free leisure time when they meet with friends in the local community.

Young people are prepared well for independence. A professional described a young person as 'thriving.' The home has the benefit of an annex building where young people preparing for independence can live. Here, they practise and develop skills in cooking, budgeting and living more independently while still being supported by staff close by. Other young people are gaining different skills, for example, by undertaking driving lessons. Developing these skills helps young people become fully prepared for moving on from the home to independence or semi-independent living.

Quality of care

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

There are positive and nurturing relationships between staff and young people. Young people enjoy spending one-to-one time with members of the staff team and feel assured that they are cared about. Staff and the management team apply clear boundaries which young people respond to well. Young people new in placement are learning skills in negotiation and compromise while they get used to the rules of the home. A social worker commented that, 'Staff have a real empathy and understanding of young people's needs.'

There is a strong commitment shown by staff in supporting young people to engage

with education. Staff have good links with educational providers and keep in close contact. This ensures a supportive approach and consistency of care is achieved. All young people are engaged in education or further education and for those new to placement, staff are proactively seeking education placements.

Good quality care planning is in place. Staff work in partnership with parents, placing social workers, leaving care teams, health professionals and specialist support agencies. The staff and management teams are strong advocates for young people. As a result, young people are provided with consistency of approach and have access to services that meet their individual needs.

Young people are provided with good support by the staff team to express their views. For example, there are regular young people's meetings. Young people have access to advocacy services and the young person's phone is available for them to contact their social workers should they wish to. Young people agree that they are listened to by staff.

Young people are provided with good support to look after their health and well-being. Healthy eating and regular exercise are encouraged, for example a bowl of fruit is readily available and young people have gym membership. Individual health checks are appropriately supported by staff. Staff strongly and confidently advocate on behalf of young people to ensure they are provided with the services they need such as substance misuse services and sexual health support.

Young people are supported to take part in a range of activities, trips and excursions in the local and wider community. Staff support young people with developing social friendships outside of the home. Young people explore their individual interests such as by volunteering with animals or attending exhibitions. This promotes their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people like their bedrooms and are able to personalise them with wallpaper or paint they have chosen themselves. Some young people's bedroom carpets are stained and damaged. Although new carpet has been purchased, there has been a delay in fitting. This means young people's bedrooms are not as homely and attractive as they could be.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe living at the home and can name staff they would talk to if they were feeling upset or worried. Placing social workers state they are confident about the ability of staff to keep young people safe. Individual staffing levels are in accordance with assessments of potential risks and the diverse needs of young people living in the home.

Young people currently living at the home do not put themselves at risk or engage in risk-taking behaviours. There is close liaison with the police in the local community

and information is shared appropriately in order to keep young people safe. Young people from the home go missing very rarely. Appropriate systems are in place to respond to incidents of young people being absent or missing from the home.

Young people generally show positive behaviour. Each young person has a reward system in place which allows them to work towards a goal. Young people respond positively to this strategy. There are low levels of physical intervention used within the home and staff are appropriately trained should the need arise. Physical interventions are recorded appropriately and the manager has clear oversight. However, records of physical intervention are currently being stored in loose leaf files which means records are not tamper proof. The home has a proportionate and appropriate response to managing criminal behaviour. Restorative approaches are used in order not to criminalise young people unnecessarily. The home works very closely in partnership with young people and youth offending teams in order to help young people achieve positive outcomes.

Recruitment and vetting checks on employees help to ensure unsuitable people do not have contact with young people. Risk assessments are undertaken in response to activities and in respect of the grounds and home. These are regularly reviewed and requisite health and safety checks are in place to ensure a safe environment is maintained. For example, the home's vehicle is regularly checked and appropriate food hygiene measures are taken to ensure risk of cross contamination is reduced.

For safeguarding reasons, young people's bedroom doors are equipped with door alarms which are used at night to alert members of staff to young people leaving and entering their rooms. The appropriate permission has been sought for use of these alarms. The door alarms are used appropriately and there is a policy in place about their use. However, this has not been updated recently and does not cover all information required. Young people confirm their privacy and dignity is protected at all times. For example, staff knock before entering young people's bedrooms. However, not all young people are able to lock their bedroom doors at night time if they want to. This has already been identified and although new locks have been purchased, they have not been fitted yet. There has been no negative impact on young people as a result of the shortfalls identified.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a strong management team. Since her registration with Ofsted last year, the Registered Manager has effected positive changes and developments within the home. Staff have received a significant amount of training, are well supervised and supported in their roles. This has created a positive atmosphere in the home. The strong management and leadership of the home has positively impacted on outcomes for young people. The Registered Manager is continuing to work towards a level 5 leadership and management qualification.

The Registered Manager has good monitoring systems in place to monitor the quality of care at the home and regular reports are supplied to Ofsted, which aids the regulator's overview of the home. However, although the home regularly consults with young people, parents and other stakeholders through formal and informal methods, the report does not reflect how this consultation has impacted on quality of care. The Registered Manager has already identified this as an area for improvement.

At the previous inspection, a requirement was made to ensure significant events are notified appropriately. Placing authorities confirm communication with the home is effective and systems have been improved to ensure the regulator is kept up to date with significant events. This aids the regulator's overview of the home. A requirement was made to review the Statement of Purpose and children's guide. These two documents have been reviewed and the home's Statement of Purpose adequately describes the function, aims and objectives of the home; but it does require further revision as staff experience and level of qualification are not described. This does not provide placing authorities or the regulator with a clear overview of the home.

Staff speak confidently about their roles. They know the young people well. Staff feel well supported and receive training opportunities. Staff receive regular supervision which supports them in developing the skills and competencies to fulfil their role. Where young people have specific needs, such as in relation to disability, not all staff members have received appropriate training in this area. Staff do however show a good awareness of how to meet young people's needs.

Young people's files are well organised and records are stored securely. Young people are involved in their own care through encouragement to read paperwork relating to them and are encouraged to have their own copies of review documentation including reports written by the home.

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.