

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Keith Riley
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides four places for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The setting is one of two children's homes operated by the same private organisation. Young people placed at the home attend the organisation's school.

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 **outstanding**.

Young people receive outstanding levels of support. They are at the centre of practice supported by a competent and motivated staff team who work consistently in a therapeutic way to ensure young people's emotional and psychological needs are met. This means that young people disengage from self-destructive behaviour such as self-harm. Young people who have previously experienced multiple placement breakdowns find safety and security in this home. They describe it in the most positive of terms.

Young people have exceptionally good relationships with the staff team, feel that staff have an interest in them and care about what they are doing. Young people report that they feel safe, are confident in talking to staff and feel they are listened to. The staff team provide an exceptional level of well-planned and highly individualised care through the implementation of comprehensive therapeutic placement plans and risks assessments.

Another strength of this home is the close link with the organisation's own school. All staff, including those at a senior level, work closely together in the school and the home environment to ensure young people's emotional needs are being met so they are able to learn. Attendance and achievements, in relation to starting points, are outstanding.

The highly visible management team are extremely effective in stimulating the staff enthusiasm, supporting and training them to deliver a first-class service. They

understand the strengths of the service and are continually looking for ways to further improve the quality of care. Young people have a strong voice in this process.

No requirements or recommendations made as a result of this inspection

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Staff provide a caring, open and homely environment where young people are supported in every aspect of their lives. There is an excellent therapy team that works regularly with young people, promoting their knowledge and understanding of their backgrounds and personal identity. Young people fully benefit from this therapeutic approach. There are excellent outcomes, for example young people disengaging from self-harming and destructive behaviour and finding other ways to understand and manage their difficult and challenging emotions. Young people develop a greater confidence in their skills and abilities, for example, they engage fully with community schemes. Their self-esteem is greatly enhanced. One young person received an award for outstanding student. Young people are able to highlight how well they are doing as opposed to before they came to the home.

Young people feel comfortable with staff and interact well with them in a relaxed manner. The highly individualised support keeping young people at the centre of practice generates a culture of respect and security. Young people's psychological, physical and health needs are met. They have the best possible care and support through staff engagement with a variety of other professionals to ensure individual needs are being met. Young people say they feel secure. Their life experiences and confidence are enriched and they reciprocate the respect and dignity afforded to them. As a result, behaviour that challenges is infrequent.

Young people have exceptionally good attendance at school since joining the home. Young people's attendance is generally 100% unless they are unwell and cannot attend. This success is mainly because the organisation has a registered school with extremely close collaborative working with education professionals to ensure young people are prepared emotionally to engage with their learning. Young people are fully supported and encouraged in their extra-curricular activities. They have exceptional success and are offered further opportunities by community groups to develop their skills. All educational achievements are celebrated and acknowledged, making young people proud of their achievements.

Young people's emotional health and well-being are given high regard. They benefit from a very experienced and knowledgeable team that understands their emotional needs very well. Young people feel safe in the home and in the company of staff. They are able to process the previous trauma in their lives in a more meaningful way and deal with their difficult thoughts and memories. This means that young people, who live in the home long-term, do not engage in risk-taking behaviour. They are not involved in any criminal activity, do not go missing, smoke or take illegal substances. Incidents of challenging behaviour are reduced dramatically.

Young people are supported on a daily basis to develop skills in relation to preparation for adulthood and independent living. Precise transition plans are developed well in advance of adulthood. This means there are very clear outcomes to be achieved with specific detail as to what this means in daily practice. The opportunity for young people to achieve independence is maximised.

Staff give high priority to supporting, encouraging and maintaining constructive contact for young people and those individuals who are important to them. A professional approach, such as supporting young people to receive visitors in the home or ensuring they have access to modern technology, for example video conferencing, leads to extremely positive outcomes. Young people are able to move on to unsupervised contact and develop positive relationships with other extended members of their families.

Quality of care

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

Young people who have experienced multiple placement breakdowns say this is the best home they have ever lived in. The emphasis placed on identifying and supporting young people's holistic needs is outstanding. The opportunities for exploring young people's emotional and psychological health are central to care-planning processes. Highly individualised and personalised support has been successful in ensuring excellent outcomes are achieved for young people. Staff demonstrate an extremely thorough understanding of the individual and diverse needs of each young person, working consistently to support them to reflect and learn from their behaviour and the way they feel inwardly.

Young people are consistently positive about staff and observed interactions are therapeutic, nurturing and challenging. Enabling young people to express themselves and 'feel heard' is entrenched in the ethos of the service. Individual monitoring and tracking of all areas relating to young people's development and progress ensure that staff are clear about the immediate and long term needs of the young people in their care. Young people are able to communicate their aspirations for their futures. They develop confidence in their skills and abilities as well as their self-esteem.

Young people talk to staff daily about how they are feeling as well as in more formal house meetings. Any issues are taken very seriously and staff take all necessary action to keep young people emotionally safe as well as physically safe. There is a safe, trusting and open culture that means young people do not need to access the formal complaints procedure. For example, records show that a young person is, 'particularly attached to his key worker and uses the relationship in a positive way'. Young people say the home 'makes things better'.

Staff support educational placements with robust communication and joint working within the home and school. Care staff are regularly in the school and education staff in the home. There is an intimate knowledge of the needs of each young person and

consistent working practices. This means that young people make significant progress in their educational attendance and achievement given their starting points.

Young people have full support from the home's own therapists and through the effective partnerships the management team have developed with external agencies. Young people fully engage in this work and feel supported to discuss and identify dangerous thoughts or impulses. This controlled approach enables staff to work with the young people to identify protective measures and young people are able to gain an understanding of their responsibilities.

Young people are strongly encouraged to explore activities they are interested in, for example, they participate in football, running and cycling. These opportunities help young people to explore skills, experience success and develop a positive self-image. For example, one young person, who accessed a community course, won the award for outstanding student.

Young people live in a safe, comfortable environment that is well maintained and furnished to a high standard. They have their own bedrooms which reflect their own personalities and interests. Young people have a sense of identity and belonging. They speak very proudly of their rooms and how they have been able to personalise these.

There is a cohesive approach to equality and diversity. For example, care plans address cultural needs, young people are encouraged to explore and develop their individuality, managers ensure staff are trained in equality and diversity, and independent visitors check that the mix of the staff team reflects the demographics of the local area.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Effective management and adherence to robust policies ensure all are protected and supported. The culture embedded in the home ensures that young people benefit from a robust and rigorous approach which treats their emotional and physical safety as paramount.

Young people stress that they feel very safe in the home, often for the first time in their lives. They live in a home where staff have created a safe environment which encourages openness and frank discussion. This often relates to very difficult topics to aid young people in identifying and addressing traumatic events that have affected them. This results in young people feeling they have a secure base and they develop emotional resilience.

Young people's immediate and long-term safety and that of the broader community is treated with extreme seriousness by staff. Young people are unmistakably protected by a range of safeguarding measures. These include excellent systems to

deal with child protection matters and swift action to involve other professionals including the police. Comprehensive individual risk assessments, that are under regular review, guide staff to keep young people as safe as possible.

Staff are very knowledgeable about the home's procedures and take action to identify and address any signs of abuse or neglect; they have experience in responding to allegations and disclosures from young people. Young people receive extremely sensitive support and professional assistance to aid them in addressing current and historical issues. This means that risk taking behaviour and coping mechanisms, such as self-harm, are eliminated.

Young people respond well to the tight boundaries of the home. There is no use of restraint to manage behaviour, young people respond positively to the rewards and consequence system adopted by the home. Likewise, going missing from care is virtually unknown, with only one incident since the last inspection of a young person recently admitted going missing. Bullying is not an issue. Young people demonstrate a maturity to deal with any issues that arise, for example, negotiating with each other how they share their personal belongings so there is no conflict.

Young people's safety within the home is ensured through the regular testing of electrical, gas and fire equipment. Young people know how to evacuate the home in an emergency such as a fire. Staff ensure that all visitors are subject to appropriate checks and supervision to ensure on-going safety for all parties.

Leadership and management

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

An effective, experienced Registered Manager ensures the staff team is successful at meeting the home's Statement of Purpose. He is well qualified and knowledgeable in young people's specific diverse needs, to support and lead the team effectively. The aims and objectives of the home are understood by authorities who place young people in the home. There is extensive work done to assess referrals to the home and meticulous planning of admissions. This includes careful consideration of the impact of a new admission to the home on the young people already resident there. Therefore, each placement has every chance of success.

Staff report high quality clinical supervision that is effective at challenging their practice and developing their knowledge and skills. Staff make overwhelmingly positive comments about the highly visible management team and the support they receive. They are provided with excellent support themselves as they care for young people who have had traumatic experiences. As a result, young people benefit from a staff team who are themselves highly supported and enthusiastic about their roles. Staff say they are 'happy to be here'. Managers are described by the staff team as 'excellent and approachable'.

The whole management team enjoy good relationships with the staff and young people, conveying their high expectations personally to all. They ensure the safety of

the home and progression of the service is maintained by excellent use of the very comprehensive checks and evaluation information gained through monitoring inspections. These are evaluative and the information is used to further improve the quality of care; for example, the written development plan includes refurbishment of an outbuilding for young people to use.

The organisation demonstrates a substantial commitment to staff training. Staff feel their training needs are met and they positively engage in the training on offer, such as attachment theory and therapeutic intervention. New staff are subject to a comprehensive induction programme and must satisfy the Registered Manager of their competence during a probation period. Young people are cared for and supported by a competent and professional staff team who are dedicated to meet their individual needs.

Significant events are notified promptly to the appropriate authority. This means that incidents are dealt with appropriately and in consultation with other professionals. Young people benefit from living in a culture where the desire to adjust practice to improve outcomes is the norm.

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.