

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC006011
Inspection date	10/12/2013
Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/12/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company owns and operates the home.

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**.

Generally, young people make good progress based on their starting points. However, outcomes can be dependent on the purpose and duration of the placement, coupled with where young people are regarding their journey through the home. Apart from one short challenging period in late summer, the home has had considerable success in securing positive outcomes for the young people who have been accommodated in the home since the previous inspection.

Young people are given clear boundaries to operate within and usually adhere to them. Staff work hard to build and maintain effective relationships with young people; who are given every support to modify behaviour patterns that have affected them prior to admission. The home has retained its practice of attempting to work through issues with young people rather than take an immediate punitive line with them. This builds trust as well as giving young people a sense of responsibility and insight regarding their own actions.

The individual needs of young people are identified and reflected in personalised plans and strategies. The home has developed and maintains strong relationships with external services and works collaboratively and cohesively with them to ensure young people's needs are met. This is demonstrated by the social worker of one young person who reports they are very pleased in way the young person they placed has engaged with staff and the placement in general.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding and have the capacity to initiate safe working practices. They work proactively to keep young people safe, whilst

continuing to promote and encourage them towards more appropriate decision making. As a result, young people's welfare is promoted positively.

The overall organisation and management of the home is good. During the late summer, it went through a testing and challenging period for a short period. However, the management and staff team worked together cohesively to counter the challenges being experienced. The group have learnt from this, having analysed their responses and practice at this time, which has strengthened them as team and allowed them to move their practice forward.

The inspection has not raised any serious issues or concerns. One area identified for further development links to improving the evidence retained during staff recruitment procedures to show that checks have been made to confirm a person's right to work in the United Kingdom and what further checks were considered appropriate during clearance procedures, if the person has lived outside the United Kingdom.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- improve the retention of evidence gathered during staff recruitment showing if checks to confirm the right to work in the United Kingdom were made and where a person has lived outside the United Kingdom, what further checks were considered regarding the clearance procedures. (NMS 16.3 (e)(f))

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are currently achieving positive outcomes in all areas of their lives. They benefit from living in an environment which allows them to work through issues and make decisions regarding their future, while feeling safe and secure. As a result, young people are currently prospering socially, emotionally and educationally.

Despite some set-backs in late summer, the culture, ethos and working practices created previously by the manager and his staff team have remained intact. Young people's needs are identified, with difficulties and challenges being dealt with sensitively and supportively. This allows them to grow in confidence and develop strong relationships; which in turn enhances their ability to form attachments and develop greater resilience.

Staff are working flexibly to ensure young people's contact arrangements are fulfilled, with distance not an issue. As a result, young people benefit from having contact with family; which is being used effectively to facilitate future plans. Young people speak well of staff and the home in general, comparing it favourably with

other children's homes they have lived in. For example, one young person described the home as 'Homely. Not a big home and has rules that are fair.'

Staff work proactively to promote the educational needs of young people. Currently they are working with those of school leaving age, or beyond. They are meeting with some success in engaging young people positively with further education. For example, one young person recently resumed college which will translate into a full-time course after the Christmas break.

Young people's health needs are being well met and are promoted positively. They are registered with community-based health services through which they access day-to-day health support. The home has good links to more specialised services which are accessed, when necessary, to meet individual need and provide additional support. Young people have their own specific health care plan which contributes towards ensuring their health needs are met. Young people are actively encouraged and supported to modify certain aspects of their lifestyle such as, tobacco, drugs and alcohol. They are also encouraged to improve their lifestyles through diet and exercise. As a result, they enjoy improvements to their general health and fitness levels.

Planning for transition and independence commences early and young people are encouraged to develop skills that will serve them well in the future. For example, one young person on a programme of semi-independence has an active role in planning, shopping and preparing food. Individual plans and strategies, coupled with pathway plans, reflect the areas where young people are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves. This develops self-esteem and gives them practical skills and experiences in preparation for moving on.

Quality of care

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

Staff are skilled and persistent in developing and maintaining positive relationships with young people, even during times of difficulty, challenge and rejection. This gives young people the chance to settle and develop trust with adults, which can be used positively as a tool to reduce tension and unrest. Strong relationships contribute significantly to minimising the number of behaviour management incidents that occur in the home.

Young people are happy with the levels of consultation that are on-going and form part of daily life in the home. This is underpinned by the high levels of communication observed throughout the inspection. Young people confirm their views, wishes and feelings influence certain aspects of the home's operation, a process that enhances the quality of care in the home which leads to better outcomes for young people.

The strong relationships and good levels of communication between young people and staff assist young people to recognise and accept boundaries. It also gives

young people an understanding of why it is not always possible for staff to act upon their immediate demands and wishes. As a result, young people begin to appreciate other people's needs as well as their own, giving them a broader perspective of life and a sense of reality.

Young people's individual needs are identified in care plans, strategies and assessments of risk, which includes their identity, religious and cultural needs. Young people contribute effectively and have a good insight into their plans, giving them a sense of direction, with agreed and achievable targets to aim for. Placement plans have moved forward since the previous inspection with the introduction of smart targets, making plans more measurable. Individual care, health and education plans are produced monthly, with the compilation of statistics along with evaluation. They demonstrate and evidence progress and any areas still to be worked on. Social workers receive a copy of these each month, an example of one of the systems used to keep them updated.

Young people are actively encouraged to make use of community-based facilities and develop individual interests of their own. They complete weekly programmes which they compile with key workers. Programmes reflect the individual interests of young people. Community involvement is promoted positively. For example, one young person recently offered their services to a local charity shop. The range of activities and interests are designed to promote exercise and fitness, as well as helping young people to become more integrated and accepted locally.

This home is well kept and maintained, with good standards of repair, equipment, fixtures, furnishings and décor. Young people have their own bedroom, which they can personalise to suit the taste of the occupant. Young people are relaxed and feel at home in their environment, which is well located to access community facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The arrangements and working practices adopted by the home to keep young people safe are good. Staff have good links to the external services that are charged with keeping young people safe. As a result, collaborative and cohesive working practices are well established.

Young people confirm they feel safe living at the home. Staff understand their role and responsibilities in promoting young people's welfare and in keeping them safe. Their individual knowledge of young people's needs, underpinned by their links with external services, provide a sound mechanism for responding to young people's changing needs for safety and protection. Staff receive appropriate training which aids them in keeping young people safe, for example, in safeguarding, positive handling and first aid.

Staff work pro-actively to stop young people from going missing and understand the procedures in place. They are based on individual assessments of risk and

underpinned by the agreed multi-agency protocols and practice that are local to the home. Young people are well supported on their return, with appropriate follow up work taking place.

The ethos and culture of the home is to work through challenges and difficulties positively rather than punitively. This is reflected in the relatively low number of sanctions that have occurred since the previous inspection, despite a short period unrest during late summer.

Physical intervention only occurs as a last resort and rarely takes place. Since the previous inspection, investment has been made regarding positive handling training, with the company now having their own qualified trainers which assist in keeping both initial and refresher training for staff up to date. Improvements to physical intervention records have also been made.

Some fragmentation of what was a stable, staff team occurred during late summer for a variety of reasons. However, the team is back in place, providing the experience and stability enjoyed prior to this period. Since the previous inspection only one new staff member has been recruited. Appropriate recruitment policies and practice is in place. However, evidencing a potential staff member's right to work in the United Kingdom and what further checks were considered appropriate during clearance procedures, if the person has lived outside the United Kingdom, is weak. Longer serving staff are being re-checked at regular intervals. These procedures ensure only suitably checked adults have contact with young people.

Young people are protected through a range of risk assessments. They participate in regular fire drills and can safely exit the home if needed. Safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken. Individual risk assessments, coupled with coping strategies, promote a safe environment for all young people. Individual strategies are updated in light of reviews of young people's risks and progress.

Leadership and management

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

The overall organisation and management of the home are good. An experienced, established manager is well supported by a staff team who are committed to the ethos, aims and working practices built up in the home over the years. It is to the manager's credit, and to the commitment of staff, that the home remained stable and young people's needs continued to be met following the recent disruption experienced. The manager has remained child focused and retains a clear vision of how the home should develop and progress.

Staff confirm they receive good support from the home's management team, receiving regular supervision and appraisal; which helps to improve their knowledge and working practice. There is a commitment to professional development, and all staff, apart from one still in their probationary period, have either gained or are in the process of gaining an appropriate professional qualification. Staff have regular

opportunities to update their core training and refresh their knowledge and understanding. This helps them to have the competence and skills to effectively meet young people's diverse needs.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home is taking place regularly. Reports appropriately review and evaluate performance, and identify areas for improvement. Young people contribute to monitoring and can discuss their views.

The manager demonstrates an understanding of the strengths of the home and looks for continued improvements to be made. For example, since the previous inspection and coinciding with the period of unrest, the manager increased the frequency of staff meetings from monthly to every fortnight, with the aim of improving communication and consistency of practice. Allied to this, there have been improvements to placement plan and behaviour management plan formats. The home has a good record of compliance. One indication of this is that, the reports relating to the external monitoring of the home have had specific sections added which now reflect the views of young people accommodated, their parents, relatives and staff working in the home.

The period since the previous inspection was mainly stable apart from the difficulties experienced in late summer. Both managers and staff have learnt from that experience and taken positive steps to ensure similar events are not repeated. This has ensured that the structure, ethos and working practices have survived and young people's needs continue to be met. Currently, young people are settled in their placement, speaking well of the home while continuing their journey towards greater independence.

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.