

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC006294
Inspection date	26/06/2012
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	01/03/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

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 run by a company and is registered to provide care for up to four young people of either gender. The Statement of Purpose for the home identifies the primary reason for a young person's placement is to support their emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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**.

A strength of this home is staff understanding of young people's needs and the appropriate, effective relationships they are able to form. The home works well with all agencies involved in young people's care ensuring that there is a consistent and informed approach from everyone.

Good community links are in place including with schools which young people attend. This ensures that young people are supported to attend and achieve within an educational setting. Young people are also able to enjoy healthy and purposeful activities. This enables them to try new things and often increases their confidence and helps them to feel more positive about themselves.

Comprehensive care planning and risk assessments are used to inform staff and help them in their work. This means that young people are able to benefit from a high quality of care provision.

The staff group are trained and supported to undertake their role working with young people. While not all of them presently hold a child care qualification, a significant number are working towards achieving formal qualification awards.

The home is well maintained and presented; however an area for development is to address the worn carpeting in some areas of the building.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 qualification . All new staff engaged from the commencement of the NMS (IN April 2011 are to hold the level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma (NMS 18.5)
- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated. Specifically, replace the worn stair and upper landing carpet. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **good**.

Young people receive good support from staff to understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Arrangements are made for them to be registered and access all external health professionals in a proactive way. Young people are enabled to take some responsibility for their healthcare and work is carried out to reduce any behaviour which may impact on their general health. Comprehensive sessions are provided in relation to smoking cessation, sexual health and drug awareness. While some young people exercise their personal choice and on occasions refuse attendance at medical appointments, staff will continue to work with them in order to ensure their health needs can be met. Physical exercise is promoted and young people benefit from the support they receive which enables them to attend structured activities.

Young people are able to contribute fully to the construction of weekly menus. They can make choices at each meal time and one young person explained how he is able to request an alternative ingredient in his pasta sauce. Staff support young people to make healthy food choices and fruit is available at all times. Any known dietary requirements for medical or religious reasons are able to be satisfied.

Young people benefit from excellent arrangements for their formal education. They attend school full time and are able to explain how they have learned and progressed while there. Young people engage fully in the range of activities provided at the school, meaning they are able to experience working as a group and form friendships. Communication between the home and school occurs on a daily basis, ensuring everyone can be aware of any issues which may arise and support the young person to deal with these appropriately. All young people who presently live at the home have made educational advances since the time they arrived.

Young people are supported by staff to develop a positive self view and feel confident about themselves. They are fully involved in all work undertaken in relation to their extended families and guided in order that they are able to understand their

background and relationships. Contact arrangements for young people in order that they can maintain links with their families are consistently facilitated. Staff will provide transport and individual support in order that visits can be positive and successful.

Young people are able to learn about life skills which will support them in their transition to adult life. Relevant opportunities which are in line with their ability and understanding are provided for them to experience cooking, shopping and laundering of their clothing. One young person is being supported to open a bank account in order that sessions on budgeting can be undertaken. Staff act as role models during interactions with the public. This enables young people to feel positive about themselves and have the knowledge to display appropriate social interaction and behaviour. The work undertaken has meant that there has been a considerable reduction in the number of occasions young people have been involved in antisocial behaviour.

Young people are enabled to contribute fully to decision making in relation to their future plans. On occasions where a young person is reluctant to attend meetings or state their wishes, good use is made of advocates including external professionals, for example, youth offending workers and social workers to ensure that young people's views are heard.

Quality of care

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

Staff form good, appropriate and professional relationships with young people. They are knowledgeable about and understand the young people well. This enables them to engage young people in the most productively consistent way.

Extensive work is undertaken prior to a young person moving to the home. This ensures that as much known information as possible about young people can be collated and a decision on their suitability for admission taken before this is agreed. This process includes a full assessment of their health, behavioural and education needs. Young people are able to visit the home and have a 'lead-up' time to their move so they can be fully prepared.

Information held in relation to each young person is comprehensive. Extremely detailed care and placement plans are in place. These set out young people's needs and how staff are to meet these in a highly individualised manner, including information relating to any cultural, religious or background needs is also recorded. Plans of care are updated daily and fully rewritten each month. This ensures that all information is up to date and the rate of young people's progress or any additional work required can easily be identified. Staff have a good working knowledge of the plans which are viewed as part of their daily routines.

Young people benefit from the excellent relationships which are in place with external agencies and professionals. Staff and managers have formed strong working

relationships with social workers, school staff, local youth offending teams and the police. They are able to call on them for advice and support with their work with the young people. An especially useful protocol has been agreed with the police who will regularly visit the home to talk with the young people and remind them of what is deemed acceptable and appropriate behaviour and interaction. The social worker for one of the young people placed at the home stated: 'This is the best home I have worked with, they are very proactive.'

The home is domestic in nature, extremely well presented and maintained. The stair and upper landing carpet is heavily stained and worn. Furnishings are of a good quality. Young people are able to help with the decoration of certain areas and have completed redecoration of the bathrooms. One young person is presently refurbishing a games/education room. The home is conveniently positioned for access to public transport and local shops and facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people at the home say that they feel safe. They are provided with mobile phones which allow them to contact adults at the home when they are out within the local area and are given a clear and structured expectation of when they should return to the home. Young people generally adhere to these boundaries. An e-safety course is also undertaken by all young people which helps them to understand how to be safe when using the internet. Further clarification of acceptable internet use is given to young people by staff who monitor internet usage.

Organised and fully detailed risk assessments are available for each young person. Each area of the assessment links into the placement plan enabling it to be clearly cross-referenced to each area of work being undertaken. Some generic assessment areas such as bullying, keeping yourself safe and using transport when out of the home are completed for all young people. Risk assessments are updated regularly alongside a change in placement or care plan. The assessments help all staff to know what is required to keep young people safe.

Sexual exploitation and child protection training is undertaken by every staff member as part of their six month induction package. This is further supplemented by annual refresher training. Written guidance and procedures detailing the course of action to follow in the event of an allegation or if they have any concerns are available for all staff to access. Staff are able to demonstrate that they have a thorough understanding of safeguarding processes and how to protect the welfare of young people.

Staff have formed particularly strong relationships with local police officers including the safeguarding officer. There are protocols in place to be instigated should a child go missing. Clarity around practice and boundaries is important and contributes to the overall package of care supplied to young people.

Should a young person wish to make a formal complaint or raise a concern about something, there is a system in place to use or they can directly contact an advocate. The process of making a complaint is understood by young people who are given written information about this in the young people's guide to the home. There are very few complaints made. Staff are good at dealing with verbal concerns raised in an informal way, negating the need to access the complaints system.

Behaviour management strategies are very good. Staff increasingly use restorative practice in place of any punitive action to support positive behaviour. There is a positive incentive scheme in place to encourage young people to display socially acceptable behaviour. All staff are trained in physical intervention and understand the need to encourage improved behaviour rather than attempt to force an issue. The use of physical intervention is minimal and staff use negotiation and diffusion with young people, only considering restraint as a last resort.

Sanctions are only given when they are unavoidable and it has not been possible to use restorative measures. A record is held of sanctions used which includes details of the effectiveness of the sanction and a signature or comment from a young person. Occasionally young people refuse to sign records but this is noted.

The welfare, health and safety of everyone at the home is protected by the arrangements in place for staff recruitment and the maintenance of a safe building. Gas and electrical equipment is tested on an arranged regular basis and fire testing takes place at least monthly, with equipment checks carried out daily and weekly. The staff recruitment vetting process in operation is robust.

Leadership and management

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

The aims and objectives of the home are clearly defined within a Statement of Purpose, Young people receive an individual copy of a guide to the home. This sets out their rights and the rules and expectations of behaviour towards staff and others. One young person said that he understood the rules and if he was not sure would ask a staff member.

There is effective management leadership and guidance in place for staff which enables them to carry out their role proficiently. They are supported formally by means of regular supervision and a comprehensive training provision. One recently appointed staff member said that they were happy with the guidance they received from all staff and took part in formal supervision with the assistant manager fortnightly. Staff meetings are held which enables discussion in relation to young people's progress and reflection on practice to occur. Individual presentations on subjects such as the role of care staff and missing young people are also undertaken at the meetings, enabling development of knowledge and practice.

The training provided for staff covers all mandatory subject areas, for example child protection, physical intervention and health and safety. There are regular refresher

sessions so staff are able to keep up to date with any changes in legislation or practice. Additionally, training is provided in more specialist and individual skills such as social pedagogy, life story work and autism.

A recommendation was made at the previous inspection that all staff should attain a Children and Young People's Workforce diploma qualification at level 3. While the recommendation has not been fully met and is repeated on this occasion, with the exception of those who are still completing their induction, all staff are undertaking or have achieved the qualification or a comparable National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

Staff are confident in the carrying out their duties. The number of staff employed at the home is sufficient to ensure the needs of young people can be met. There is a mix of experience and gender within the staff group meaning young people can choose to receive assistance in their care by a staff member they feel comfortable with.

Internal and external monitoring occurs which allows managers to fully evaluate the quality of care provided. There is daily auditing of records by managers and case files are monitored regularly. Results of file audits are fed back to key workers during supervision ensuring any deficiencies in the information held are addressed. Monthly visits are made to the home by external managers and a overview of practice and development is completed on a six monthly basis in line with regulations. A development plan is in place which sets out the plans for improvement and enhanced practice at the home. A requirement and recommendation were made in relation to record keeping at the last inspection; both of these have been addressed by the manager.

Young people's records are well maintained, clear, detailed and updated on an almost daily basis. They are held securely; detailed information contained within the record clearly sets out how the contents may be viewed by young people and with whom any content may be shared.

Staff are able to give examples of how young people who were previously accommodated at the home have progressed in their lives since leaving, including details of their employment and achievements. Some of these young people still visit the home to talk to staff about their progress.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.