

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008270
Inspection date	07/09/2011
Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	30/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The setting is a family-sized home. Care is provided for two young people of either sex who have experienced emotional and behavioural difficulties. A private company owns and operates this setting.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

The home provides an excellent standard of care overall. This is because all aspects of care practice and care planning are highly effective. Each young person's individual needs are being met and each one is achieving exceptional outcomes based on their respective starting points.

Young people's views and needs are central to everything that goes on in the home. They have extremely positive views about the quality of their care, saying for example, 'it deserves outstanding every time'. Relationships between managers, staff and young people are exceedingly consistent, caring and purposeful, so that young people feel very safe and can flourish.

Managers involve themselves in the life of the home and lead clearly and skilfully. They are highly committed and experienced. They are as ambitious for each young person's success as they are for continuously improving the setting. Monitoring is rigorous and ensures that the excellent provision continues. Two shortfalls identified during the inspection are minor and isolated. They do not detract in any way from the quality of care in the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a written record of all first aid treatment given to young people during their placement (NMS 6.15)
- ensure that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and that this appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making exceptional progress to develop a positive self view. Their ability to understand their background and to develop and maintain realistic relationships with both family members and peers in the community has progressed enormously. This is due to the caring and consistent support that young people receive from staff and managers in the home. Staff diligently support young people practically and emotionally, welcoming friends and relatives to the home and helping young people understand and manage their emotions surrounding relationships.

Young people are enjoying improving emotional and physical health. They are in very good daily routines and are eating and sleeping well. They feel very supported and confident to talk to staff about all aspects of their personal health and development. They are also making use of various specialist therapeutic support and advice, for example relating to life story work. They are learning to take responsibility for their sexual and emotional health and to understand the impact of relationships and changing situations on their overall health.

Young people have exceptionally good attendance at school and college and have achieved excellent qualifications given their starting points. They are taking part in work experience and part-time work, as well as taking a full part in contributing to the life of the home, by helping with shopping, cleaning and cooking. Young people are confident that they will be able to cope with living independently at the appropriate time.

Young people enjoy a significant amount of free time out locally with friends because they behave responsibly in the community and keep in regular touch with staff. They are able to undertake many activities independently, using public transport and budgeting for their costs while out with friends. They also greatly enjoy quality time with staff. They talk about pamper days with staff in preparation for the school 'prom' and long walks by the sea on holiday this summer.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff and are respectful of their advice and the boundaries that they put in place. There is a small, consistent staff group, all of whom have high aspirations for each young person. As a result, young people always know who is looking after them and express complete confidence in each one. In addition, young people have significant, trusting and long standing bonds, akin to that of a good parent, with their key workers.

Staff place the well-being of each young person at the centre of their practice within the home. They demonstrate this clearly to young people through the time they spend with them and their attention to the detail of each one's daily life and overall plans. For example, staff listen to young people when they say they feel unwell and

decide together on the course of action to take, arranging a medical appointment and discussing throughout the day what food and drink is best and whether or not it is appropriate to go out.

Young people feel immensely cared for and supported both emotionally and physically by staff. They are helped and advised towards active lifestyles, nutritious food choices and personal responsibility for their own health. Staff are trained in the administration of first aid and medication and complete accident records and logs appropriately when there are accidents or incidents. However, the detail of what first aid has been given is not being recorded at present, which makes it slightly more difficult to ascertain the seriousness of any accident or incident. This has not had a direct impact on any young person because good assessment and treatment has been given in every instance.

Staff are proactive and imaginative in finding ways to support young people to make progress in various aspects of their lives. For example, they undertake lengthy ongoing work with young people in relation to re-establishing and sustaining positive relationships with friends and relatives. They help young people to manage phone and internet contacts in safe and appropriate ways. They provide practical and emotional support for venues, travel and activities, so that face-to-face contact visits are as enjoyable and relaxed as possible. They provide very effective support for young people to deal with the emotional complexities and demands which arise from the changing needs, agendas and dynamics of these relationships. As a result, young people are becoming emotionally resilient and understand why it may not be in their best interests to act upon their wishes in every case.

Young people are consistently and centrally involved in the planning and review of their care. They often write their daily progress sheets and they comment upon their monthly progress tracker reports. For example, one young person said, 'I had a good month – I'm starting to behave and realise that things don't just appear'. Staff challenge barriers to inclusion for young people by providing practical and emotional support. For example, they attend parents' evenings at school, help young people prepare for 'prom' night and visit the parents of friends to ensure that friendships and social contacts are suitable, safe and appropriate. Staff openly encourage and support young people to talk with their social workers, independent reviewing officers and advocates when there are issues that they want heard. For example, they ask for help with getting adult friends vetted and approved as befrienders because they want to be able to visit their homes. Similarly, they ask for dates of reviews to be altered so that their college timetable is not adversely affected. All this gives young people increasing confidence to participate and make appropriate decisions and interactions with professionals.

Young people have a very real sense that this is like a normal family home. Their photos and belongings are kept around the house and everything is clean, tidy and well maintained. There is no need for electronic surveillance and doors are not unnecessarily locked. Staff create and maintain a homely atmosphere and attend to young people as would a good parent. For example, they make sure that young people have their school uniforms and equipment ready for the new term and that

they have organised their routines in order to arrive on time at school or college. The home is the same as all those in the street and the gardens are neat and pleasant, so that there is no institutional feel. Neighbours and friends are made welcome at the home. Young people might show them their pet rabbits and hamsters or play electronic games or watch films with them. Daily activities in the school holidays are based around young people's own choices. Staff spend quality time with young people, taking them for meals out, shopping trips and active walks. Every day is maximised as an opportunity for building young people's confidence and life skills.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel very safe here and are very safe too. This is because an excellent balance is achieved between protecting vulnerable young people and enabling them to take appropriate risks as part of their growth and development. Staff know young people's stage of behavioural and emotional development extremely well. They use risk assessment documents as effective tools to address young people's specific safety needs and risks. Staff have forged open lines of communication with young people, whereby all aspects of behaviour and possible risks are considered and talked about. Decisions, such as, to have free time, are carefully considered and the boundaries and expectations clearly set down. This means that young people can gain more trust and increasing confidence about how to manage their own safety.

Young people are behaving extremely well. They keep in touch with staff when they are out on free time. They maturely address areas of difficulty through setting their own behaviour targets alongside staff. They increasingly earn good money rewards and seldom have sanctions applied because they are maintaining excellent behaviour. Restraints never occur because staff successfully manage tensions and diffuse situations so that incidents do not escalate. Young people very rarely go missing, and if they do, they return quickly. They are able to say that there is no point in going missing because they like being here and want to be here.

Young people are always responded to positively by managers and staff. Staff are carefully selected and vetted and behave responsibly and protectively towards young people whose wellbeing they genuinely care about. Staff are trained in child protection and understand the implications of safeguarding vulnerable teenagers. They are proactive and creative in their safeguarding practice. For example, they visit households and engage with adults whom the young people are associating with. They refer any concerns to the local authority safeguarding service promptly. They also make use of local specialist agencies to engage with young people and help them learn how to behave safely and protect themselves from criminal and sexual exploitation as well as drug and alcohol misuse. Most importantly, they maintain open lines of communication with each young person and address safety issues sensitively and fairly with them, as a good parent would.

Leadership and management

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

The manager stimulates the enthusiasm and commitment of staff and channels their efforts very effectively. There is a culture of outstanding practice within the home and there were no issues arising at the last inspection. The aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are being met and the document is being revised to better express the home's individuality and how the new national minimum standards are addressed. The presence, leadership and clear decision making of the manager inspires both young people and staff alike. The manager takes a regular part in the life of the home but is also extremely proactive and keeps up to date with practice developments. She works with managers across the organisation to disseminate good practice and drive up standards generally.

The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the setting. A central strength is the small homely environment and its position in an urban community, where there is access to all the usual amenities. Also central is the skill, consistency and commitment of the staff group, working with a small number of young people over an extended period to see them into independence and beyond. This is underpinned by careful management of rotas and vetting of new staff, so that consistency of care for young people within a normal home environment remains top priority.

There is rigorous monitoring of the effectiveness of the setting so that the manager has an up-to-date view at all times of the trends, successes and weaknesses of the setting. Monitoring is periodically reviewed and development plans are in place. Documents identify priorities for maintaining and extending the home's current successes to young people who will be placed in the future. These include plans for improving the house itself; plans for the future management of the home; and plans for the ongoing training and development of the staff group.

Staff are all qualified or undertaking professional qualifications. They also undertake good quality periodic update training and specialist courses relating to child care issues. They receive regular and effective support and formal supervision. Staff receive annual appraisal, but the process does not formally take account of young people's views. In addition the manager has not completed formal documentation regarding one staff member's appraisal. The impact of this shortfall is minimal because staff and young people all state that their views are heard and they are well supported.

The organisation of the home is excellent. All staff make a good contribution to ensuring that records are clear, up to date, stored securely, and contribute to an understanding of the child's life. Staff prioritise the involvement of young people in their records and assist them to create and maintain positive memories of their time here. Significant events are notified in a timely to the appropriate authorities and the right action is taken and documented by all staff following incidents. There is excellent cooperation with numerous agencies involved with the resident young people. As a result, the quality of care and the outcomes for young people are also

excellent.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.