

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC008484
Inspection date	19/11/2012
Inspector	Debbie Foster
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a private children's home; the owner is also the Registered Manager. The home provides care for up to six young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities within a group living setting.

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 well-experienced staff team ensures young people receive good care and support. Young people make good progress in relation to the starting point of their placements. They benefit from being cared for by staff that are committed and child centred.

Young people enjoy and benefit from trusting relationships with staff. Staff recognise the importance of building strong relationships with young people and see it as the key to the success of their work. This enables young people to positively engage with staff and in turn brings improvement and better outcomes in their lives.

Young people who have lived at the home for some time are developing into confident, independent individuals who are aware of their rights. Young people who have recently moved into the home are welcomed and plans are in place to meet their needs. This includes their health promotion, safety, education, leisure activities and preparations for independence.

Young people's individual needs and interests are actively promoted and celebrated. Young people say that they like living in the home. Staff support young people well to recognise the importance of keeping safe and this is given high importance. Risk taking behaviour has reduced or stopped. Young people are protected from harm by staff that are trained in safeguarding young people. All young people said that they 'get on' with all staff.

Professionals consulted with about the service are very positive about the standard

of care provided to young people and express no concerns. Positive leadership and management and increased internal monitoring ensures young people get the best opportunities to improve their life chances.

Areas for development relate to care planning not always setting out individual boundaries, detailed independence work and all the direct work undertaken and the outcome or progress made by all young people. Educational records do not always detail grades for the young person on admission to clearly show the academic progress made by each young person during the school year. Staff have not received training in self-harm.

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 each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in full. In particular recording how care is specifically provided in line with the care and independence plans. Specify the boundaries set for each young person. Direct work sessions must demonstrate all the work undertaken and show the progress young people are making, including budgeting skills (NMS 25.2)
- ensure children are helped by staff to achieve their educational or training goals. In particular, that a child's grades at the start of their placement are clear and support evidence of the progress made at school during their stay (NMS 8.4)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff and volunteers are supported to undertake. Staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children and purpose of the setting, and training keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments. In particular training in self-harm. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people flourish in a nurturing environment. From their starting point on admission to the home, young people continue to make excellent progress in their lives. They are very well supported to develop an understanding of their lives and achieve stability. This helps them to build self-esteem and confidence which supports them to move positively forward in their lives.

Young people enjoy good health. Their health needs are thoroughly assessed when they arrive at the home. All routine and specialist health appointments are undertaken to ensure that their needs are very well met. Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and they say that they eat healthily. Young people benefit from the good

advice they are given by staff, other professionals on a wide range of health and social issues. These include areas such as, sexual health and the risks attached to smoking. Young people have access to mental health services which assists and promotes their emotional health and well-being. The arrangements for the administering, storage and recording of medication are robust. As a result, young people are protected and have medicines when they need them maintain good health.

Young people's participation in education is exceptionally good. Barriers to young people's education are challenged and full-time education placements quickly reinstated. Young people who have long absences or had sporadic school attendance, prior to their admission are quickly supported to return to the learning environment. Young people have also progressed into further education. Young people understand the importance of learning and are making good choices about how to develop their abilities and skills through education. As a result, young people's achievements are significant given their starting point when they came to live in the home.

The daily life of the home enables young people to develop their life skills in preparation for independence. For example, they help with household chores and learn how to cook. They also learn how make their own appointments with other agencies, such as the Connexions and housing associations. This helps young people to develop confidence and self-esteem. Staff understand the importance of making sure that young people have pathway plans at an appropriate stage as part of their preparation for independence. Young people contribute to these plans. However, there are shortfalls in routinely implementing of a weekly plan to establish fully independence routines which support young people nearing the time when they will leave the home. The records do not always evidence the independence work which has been undertaken to demonstrate the skills the young person has gained and achieved. An older young person said that 'I can cook and look after myself although I'm still not so good with budgeting,' and 'I sometimes 'blow' my allowance.' This is not ensuring all young people are fully prepared to living independently and successfully as young adults.

Young people benefit significantly from the support they are given to build and maintain positive contact with family, carers and friends. This helps to keep in touch with people who are important to them. As a result, young people have a clear sense of identity as well as established support networks with family and stronger community links.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit tremendously from a child focused environment provided by a caring and committed staff team. A staff member said, 'We always work on building positive relationships with young people first and we find this helps a lot with them trusting us.' Staff evaluate the progress of young people on a regular basis, through daily handovers, staff meetings and supervision. This process contributes well to

statutory reviews.

Young people benefit from the excellent relationships staff have established with their tutors and educational professional. A head teacher stated, 'the staff work with school staff excellently, they come into school to support (young person) if required. They work very consistently with (young person), giving clear boundaries and strategies which have impacted on their behaviour positively. (Young person) is calmer and more settled now. This has helped in their school work achievements.' All young people in placements over six months have increased educational attendance progress. Staff work consistently and tirelessly to breakdown identified barriers to young people's education. This supports them well in making progress in their learning and increasing their attendance and attainment within education. A young person stated 'The staff are really supportive with school; they've helped me to sort things out.' However, young people's educational grades are not always recorded from the start of their placement to clearly show the progress they are making educationally.

Relationships between young people and staff are positive, strong and constructive, although boundaries are tested on occasions. The manager and staff have an excellent awareness of the dynamics of relationships. A young person said, 'Staff are the best thing about living here,' another commented, 'the best thing about living here is that there is always someone to talk to, they are calm and that's good.' Young people know how to express any complaints they may have but they have not made any. Young people are making continued progress from their starting points. This occurs due to the trusting relationships built which brings tremendous engagement to assist in young people moving positively forward in their lives.

Young people's wishes and feelings are actively sought. This takes place through general discussions, residents meetings and through individual one-to-one sessions. Staff members routinely consult young people on all aspects of their care including care planning, changes in the home, menus, education, family contact and activities.

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage and support young people to become involved in an extensive range of activities within the local community. For example, they have frequent opportunities to participate in outdoor and community based activities. These include, climbing club, scouts, horse riding, golf, cycling, football teams, youth clubs, community events and socialising with friends. Young people made numerous comments about their interests and hobbies they are involved in. One young person said 'I've just started playing golf, and have my own clubs; I can't wait to go to the golf range tonight.'

Needs relating to young people's personal identity and cultural background are clearly identified in their care plans and positively promoted in their daily living. A young person is pursuing being confirmed and this is supporting them in having a clear sense of identity and following their religious beliefs. Young people are empowered and encouraged by positive role modelling from staff members to identify and address inappropriate language and behaviour.

Young people live in a large detached house in a residential neighbourhood. The accommodation consists of six single bedrooms and staff sleep-in facilities. There are communal areas for eating and relaxing. The property blends in with the neighbourhood and resembles a large family home. The environment is safe and comfortable. A young person said, 'I like the house, it's comfortable and I have a nice bedroom. I didn't know what to expect when I first was coming into care. It just looks like everyone else's house in the street.' Young people have personalised their own bedroom to their taste. All bathrooms and toilets are lockable to preserve privacy and dignity. Young people and staff share meals together around the dining table which promotes conversation, opportunities to hear young people's views and builds social and life skills.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a physically-safe environment and are protected from harm. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to young people's personal circumstances, and know exactly what they need to do to protect young people. Young people are protected from bullying. All young people said that 'There is no bullying happening,' and 'Staff would stop it.' Positive work with young people has resulted in incidents of going missing significantly reducing.

Young people are safe at home. Young people stated 'Yes, I feel safe here.' Clear risk assessments are recorded to help the staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. This develops young people's understanding and the reasons adults are concerned. Staff ensure plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and address young people's needs. They are knowledgeable about young people's specific vulnerabilities. As a result, young people's risk-taking behaviours have stopped or are reducing and they feel cared for and protected.

Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Young people state, 'Staff are fair with us, and you get a chance first.' Personalised behaviour management strategies are used. These contain good, individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. Physical restraint is used to manage behaviour where a young puts themselves or others at serious risk at the home. These events are not a regular occurrence. Low level holds have been used by staff that are trained in the provider's de-escalation policy and authorised intervention techniques. Record keeping relating to this is good and there is evidence that it is frequently monitored and reviewed by the manager. This occurs to identify patterns or trends that can be used to support young people further, and reduce or stop such incidents in the future.

Young people are protected from any hazards by a wide range of health and safety

procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. There are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home or on admission so that they know what to expect if they go to live there.

The recommendation made at the last inspection has been met because improvements have been made to the environment. In particular the carpets in the hallway and lounge have been renewed, with additional pictures and mirrors being put in place.

There is a stable, well-established and consistent staff team with a good range of skills and experience among its members. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of written guidance during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. Management support and supervision are described as, 'regular,' and 'good' by staff who clearly value the contributions of the management team.

The young people are receiving care from competent staff that are experienced and appropriately trained to meet their needs. Most staff have the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 caring for children and young people or are completing the qualification. All staff are trained in a variety of safety and childcare subjects. This is supported by an on-going programme of regular refresher training, for example, safeguarding, first aid, behaviour management, child attachment and life story work. However, the staff team have not received training in self-harm which would enhance the staff team's competency further to meet the needs of some young people.

The manager has an effective system to monitor report and evaluate the administration systems of the home and any areas of weakness identified are promptly acted upon. This along with the service development plan, effectively evaluate and ensure that standards at the home continue to improve.

Overall, young people's case file records and other written documentation are of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. The young people know that they can have access to their records. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff and yet accessible to young people.

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.