

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC015254
Inspection date	13/06/2012
Inspector	Elaine Cray
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate five boys with emotional and behavioural difficulties or a learning disability. The home offers a therapeutic service to boys with assessed needs linked to sexually-inappropriate behaviour. The home has a school on a site and this is registered with the Department for Education.

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**.

Young people receive good and well planned care. They make good progress during their placements at this home. Effective frameworks to support their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs are consistently implemented by staff. The effective and proactive management of the home is an outstanding strength. There are exceptional safeguarding outcomes for all young people living at the home.

Young people are consistently supported to attend education. There is a strong commitment to help young people address significant deficits in educational attendance and achievement. Most young people attend the home's school and some have successfully moved on to mainstream education. Young people are proud of their achievements, grow in confidence and develop positive identities. Young people are consistently rewarded for their own individual achievements and development.

Young people are robustly safeguarded. They develop a greater understanding of how to keep themselves safe and improve behaviour. Young people's behaviour significantly improves because they understand the clear boundaries. They also value the strong emphasis placed on positive and improved behaviour.

Young people are provided with care, therapy and opportunities to enable them to develop emotional resilience and change behaviours. Young people with complex

difficulties and challenges make meaningful progress at the home. The interactive relationship between care, therapy and education makes a significant contribution to young people's progress. Young people develop in maturity and personal awareness to facilitate their transition through adolescence and into adult life.

Young people develop emotional resilience and self-confidence because they are treated with a high level of respect. Staff ensure young people's individual needs are explored and facilitated. Young people live in an environment where their awareness and tolerance of equality and diversity is promoted. Young people are engaged in their placements and plans for their future. Their wishes, feelings and views are heard and included in the running of the service.

The manager has strong leadership qualities which impact on and motivate a progressively developing and dedicated staff team. Organisation, policies and procedures are robustly and effectively managed. There is a clear focus on quality assurance to maintain existing standards and strive for further improvements in the running of the service and outcomes for young people. However the service does not fully engage all young people of different abilities and with complex safeguarding needs in preparing for independent living.

There are two recommendations set as a result of this inspection.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- review the risk assessment process in relation to independence preparation packages to encourage young people to take appropriate risks as a normal part of growing up. This is with particular regard to young people who present significant risk and additional needs in terms of levels of understanding (NMS 4.4)
- ensure the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for "eligible" care leavers and works collaboratively with the young person's social worker or personal adviser in implementing the plan. This is with particular regard to young people who present significant risk and additional needs in terms of levels of understanding. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people progress well in this service. They grow in self-confidence and develop good emotional resilience because they engage in meaningful relationships with staff. Young people benefit from living in a structured and nurturing environment.

They say they are doing well, they see improvements in all aspects of their lives and feel good about themselves.

Social workers and other professionals are confident and complimentary about the quality of care and progress made by young people. They identify developments in self confidence, self-reflection, taking personal responsibility, education and understanding of family relationships. Social workers view staffing levels, supervision of young people and safety as a key strength of this home. There is minimal engagement in risk taking and offending behaviours.

Young people value their relationships and attachments with staff. They firmly believe that they progress because the staff care and look after them. Young people greatly value the direct yet sensitive approach by staff. They believe that staff always let them know how they are doing, receiving good encouragement and direction in how to improve. Young people also acknowledge that a firm approach, when things do not go so well, has a fair and positive impact on their behaviour. Young people's comments include; 'the staff always let me know when I have done well' and 'education is brilliant'.

Young people are especially proud of their educational attendance and achievement. Some young people have achieved their goal to return to mainstream education and perform on par with their peers. Other young people have addressed some significant deficits in both educational attendance and achievement. They say they now enjoy and do well in maths and literacy. Some have identified strong artistic flair and ability. Young people say they know staff are proud and care about their futures. Young people say they understand the importance of school, going to college and being able to get a job. They feel good about themselves as they are consistently congratulated and rewarded for their efforts and achievements. Certificates are proudly displayed in bedrooms and clearly documented in their individual records.

Young people also value their improved relationships with their families. They appreciate the support provided by staff in facilitating contact arrangements. Young people have a greater understanding of their backgrounds, family circumstances and behaviour. These outcomes have a positive impact on the quality of their family relationships and frequency of visits.

Young people enjoy good and improved health. They have a greater understanding of and take some responsibility for their medical and health needs. Young people enjoy the food, they feel consulted because they are asked about their preferences and encouraged to cook their own food. Young people develop better self-esteem because they develop a good understanding about their emotional and mental well-being. All young people positively engage in and benefit from regular therapy. Young people also understand how lifestyle choices can impact on healthier lifestyles. They understand healthy eating, exercise, better personal hygiene, the impact of smoking and sexual health. Young people also understand how to access a variety of health agencies that support their medical needs and give advice about lifestyle choices.

Young people say they feel listened to. They can express their views, feelings and

wishes because they are given time to talk to their therapist, key workers, teachers and support workers. Young people say they are involved in their placements, their care planning and the running of the home. They are pleased the staff listen to their concerns and are appreciative that the manager takes time to write to them about any complaints they may have. They are happier because their ideas for decorating the home are key to the recent improvements in the house. They also feel involved because they attend and contribute to meetings and what is written about them. Some young people would like to explore more opportunities to develop independent living skills.

Young people grow in confidence. They are increasingly able to express themselves as individuals, explore adolescence and their potential as young adults. Admission to the home has very specific criteria and placements require structured care and boundaries. Young people understand and generally respect these boundaries. They also feel more positive about how they are treated as individuals and included in their placements. They are becoming increasingly empowered to take more responsibility for their behaviours and futures. Young people believe these developments in the home are helping them grow in maturity.

Quality of care

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

Young people are consistently cared for and thrive because there are effective frameworks for care, education support and behaviour management. These systems and the good quality of care demonstrate that all staff are consistently concerned with the welfare of young people at the service. Young people are looked after by a competent and well trained staff team. They develop in maturity due to a clear focus by all staff to develop engaging and meaningful relationships with the young people. Young people's behaviours improve due to staff discussing and implementing clear expectations and boundaries.

Care and education planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Young people invest in and value their care plans because staff include them at all stages of drawing up, implementing and reviewing the plans. Plans are meaningful because staff understand and respect how young people's challenges and experiences have impacted on them. Social and youth offending workers say young people and staff work in partnership to effectively support placement plans.

This service provides clear focus on enabling young people to improve emotional resilience. Key working and therapy sessions are used productively as young people develop self awareness. They begin to take responsibility for their behaviour and aspire to and explore new and worthwhile opportunities. The care, education and therapeutic frameworks are effectively connected. Young people make progress because there are good communication and review processes with consistent involvement of the young people.

Young people are supported by staff who have a good understanding of equality and diversity, including gender, social, economic and cultural backgrounds. All young people are able to contribute and progress because staff promote meaningful communication strategies for young people, including those with learning difficulties. Staff provide an environment where young people can express themselves and also explore their awareness of diversity. They are encouraged to develop a sensitive awareness and tolerance of each others' needs and identity.

Young people's education is supported with individual plans. There is a school attached to the home. Staff also maintain good working relationships with local schools and colleges. The routines in the house including bedtimes, getting up, mealtimes and expectations regarding homework and staffing levels are arranged in order to promote education. Staffing levels are arranged to ensure young people enjoy and pursue a variety of interests, activities and leisure opportunities. The young people are particularly proud of raising money in order to sponsor a hearing dog for the deaf.

Young people are supported with opportunities to develop independence skills. They are encouraged to take responsibility for domestic and budgeting tasks. Some young people are supported with independence plans and they are rewarded with increased trust and responsibility as they develop in their placements. However, some young people's opportunities to develop independence and social skills outside the home are limited. These limitations are mainly due to safeguarding concerns resulting in structured risk management strategies.

Some young people also require independence programmes that respond to their specific levels of understanding. The independence preparation processes are not pragmatic and flexible enough to meaningfully meet the complex needs of some young people. These current circumstances do not fully enable young people to reflect on the reality of independent living and challenges outside of the nurturing, secure and structured environment of the home.

Young people's physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored. They are supported with detailed and individualised healthcare plans. Staff liaise well with appropriate health and advice agencies. They demonstrate effective knowledge of health issues relating to young people's diverse and varied backgrounds and lifestyle choices. Young people's health is promoted and monitored with individual key working and group education discussion. Young people's health is promoted and protected with safe and effective procedures for the storage and administration of medication.

Healthy eating is promoted, with balanced menus that take account of young people's choices and a multi-cultural perspective. Young people enjoy good health because they are provided with a variety of activities that encourage physical exercise, including visits to the gym.

Communication processes are good and enable young people to express their views, wishes and feelings. Regular house meetings, key working contact and therapy

sessions are integral to making sure young people are involved in the running of the home and their placement. Information about how to complain, an advocacy service and external agencies is displayed in the house and is contained in the young people's guide.

The house is well maintained and further improved with on-going redecoration and refurbishment. There are clear efforts to make the house comfortable and homely. Young people are involved in choosing items and décor for the house. The home provides young people with a good environment to meet their needs. They have a choice of lounges to watch television, play pool and comfortably relax in private or as a group. There are good levels of privacy for young people; they have their own bedroom key and privacy lock for the bathroom.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are exceptional improvements in the safeguarding outcomes for all young people staying at this home. Levels of safety are outstanding because staff implement the robust and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. Safeguarding strategies are appropriate to the significant vulnerability of and levels of danger presented by the young people living at this home.

Young people say they feel safe. They are more content and confident as there is a decrease in bullying in the home. Young people feel protected because they have good relationships with staff and can talk about concerns. They engage in therapy sessions to explore their backgrounds, risks and behaviour. Young people's social workers expressed a clear confidence in the home's ability to keep young people safe. They say young people's awareness about their own and the safety of others is improved since being at the home.

Young people's welfare and safety is effectively addressed. They are protected because the manager is proactive in establishing effective links and working partnerships with agencies. Staff maintain effective links with the police, the local safeguarding children's team and the youth offending service. There are excellent procedures to monitor risk taking activities and young people going missing from care. The implementation of the joint missing from care protocol as drawn up between the police and the provider is currently being addressed. Young people receive a consistent and dedicated response from staff resulting in a significant reduction in offending for young people at the home.

Safeguarding strategies focus on robust risk assessment resulting in high levels of supervision of young people both inside and outside the home. Risk assessments effectively link into individual behaviour plans. Young people increasingly work with and value their behaviour and risk management plans because staff use jointly agreed incentives and rewards. Staff have an excellent knowledge of how young people's previous experiences impact on and influence behaviour and the need for

safeguarding strategies. Staff take time to understand the background of each young person, therefore making behaviour plans and expectations meaningful. These developments increasingly empower young people to reach their potential and contribute as responsible young adults in society.

Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. There has been a significant decrease in incidents resulting in physical interventions over recent months. Young people clearly value and respond to the strongly emerging ethos of proactive and positive behaviour management. They understand and are motivated by the praise and rewards they receive for good behaviour. Young people's comments and their records show that the sanctions used when things do not go so well for them are fair.

Young people are protected with robust recruitment processes, including checks on agency staff who come to work at the home. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping young people safe. Staff are well trained in child protection, behaviour management and health and safety.

Young people live in a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the event of a fire. The house safe and secure, health and safety checks are an integral part of the daily running of the home.

Leadership and management

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

This service has fully addressed the statutory requirement and recommendation from the previous interim inspection. The newly Registered Manager promotes and is embedding a strong and proactive ethos for improvement.

There is strong leadership and staff are supported to provide consistent boundaries with a balanced and consistent focus on reward. There is a committed celebration of individuality and a dedicated response to understanding and facilitating diversity. The manager promotes a clear emphasis on maintaining meaningful and respectful relationships between staff and young people. Young people thrive and staff develop in this positive environment.

The care framework is implemented by competent staff with good knowledge of the clear and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. Staffing levels are excellently managed, responding to increase in the risks and needs of the young people and in keeping with the service's Statement of Purpose. Young people are appropriately cared for because management systems are established and robust. Trends and patterns are used to address improvement because records are clear and accountable.

All members of staff and young people value the management and on-going development of the home. Staff are knowledgeable and competent because they

receive thorough and supportive induction. They are developed and challenged with regular supervision and an additional mentoring programme. Staff are able to meet the needs of the young people because they receive regular and updated training.

Internal and external monitoring of the service identifies good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The need for improvement is regularly reviewed by canvassing social workers, young people and staff with surveys. Action plans are also drawn up after each young people's meeting and staff meeting. Actions are swiftly addressed and more long term needs are strategically included in the home's development plan.

The manager has a thorough knowledge of the legal framework and carries out regular management checks. These checks, alongside monthly checks by an independent visitor, ensures a comprehensive audit against the requirements and standards set down for registered children's homes.

There is a clear commitment, energy and ambition to provide and continuously improve the care framework. Young people are looked after, valued and enabled to achieve their full potential by well trained and motivated staff. This dynamic leadership promotes an energetic and child-centred service.

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.