

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020545
Inspection date	26/09/2012
Inspector	Susan Mullin
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	15/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people of either gender with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is privately owned and the organisation operates other children's homes in the area.

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 **outstanding**.

Young people are making outstanding progress educationally, socially and emotionally. Young people's care plans are of a very high quality, tailored to each unique individual and very clearly identify their needs. Young people make significant progress with their school attendance and subsequent achievements. This is a direct result of the staff team, who actively encourage and support young people to attend and value their education provisions. Young people are encouraged to be actively involved in their plans for the future and have a say in the general running of the home. This helps to increase young people's self-esteem and they have a real sense of 'belonging' in the home.

The relationships between staff and young people are of extremely high quality, based on trust, warmth, consistency, high expectations and aspirations. A social worker stated, 'The young person has benefitted by the boundaries and expectations that are in place.' This provides the security that young people need in order to thrive. The home is extremely young person focused. Young people confirm that they are very satisfied with the quality of care they receive. Young people are kept safe and say they feel safe in the home and community. Behaviour is well managed and continues to improve significantly.

The home is extremely well managed by a committed and enthusiastic manager. She meticulously and effectively monitors the home, over and above what is required by regulation. She clearly understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and regularly challenges the staff team to deliver ever higher standards. Staff consider

equality and diversity and this is demonstrated in the culture of the home. Young people are treated equally and fairly, irrespective of their religion, race, sexual orientation and religious belief. The opportunities provided by staff, allow young people to recognise their own identity, which in turn helps them grow in confidence and pride.

Young people make exceptional progress in relation to their starting point of the placement across all aspects of welfare. No breaches of regulations or standards are identified.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people's life chances improve dramatically as a result of the care they receive. Young people achieve very positive outcomes and are provided with high quality care within a warm, caring, nurturing environment with firm and consistent boundaries. One young person said, 'The staff are brilliant here, the home is good and my bedroom is very nice. This home is better than I thought it would be and I have nothing bad to say about this place. I am keeping out of trouble and my behaviour is improving all the time. School is going great and my teacher is brilliant.'

Staff have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the complex individual needs of young people in their care. They support young people to make outstanding progress based on their assessed abilities and needs. Staff support young people with any disappointments or upsets they may face, which can arise from difficult family relationships. This helps them to manage their feelings more positively and begin to understand the complexities of their lives.

Young people enjoy a good range of activities and opportunities in the community, such as swimming, sponsored activities, fund raising and visiting theme parks. This enables young people to make friends and to develop and maintain good physical health. Young people eat healthily and learn about preparing and making meals for themselves and the staff. This helps young people develop skills for later on in life. Health outcomes for young people are also very positive. Young people do not misuse substances. There are effective working relationships with agencies who support their physical and emotional health. As a result, young people can enjoy a healthy, well-structured life where they can follow some of their hobbies and lifestyle choices.

The home promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference. As a result young people begin to truly appreciate the significance of differing values and are actively learning to have respect for each other.

Young people are consulted regularly about their care in the home and prospects for their future. One young person said, 'The staff always talk to me about what I want to do when I am older. I want to be an electrician or be in the army. I know I need to work hard at school to be able to choose what I want to do in the future.' Another

young person said, 'The staff talk to me about the meetings I have with my social worker, they let me know what is going on and they always ask my opinion about things. I see my care plans and sign them to show that I understand them.'

Young people are making significant progress with their education. They are all now attending school regularly and full time, following a significant period with little or no school attendance. They are gaining awards for much improved behaviour in school, for example by taking responsibility for their actions and reducing their use of bad language. Young people continue to achieve well in class and all have made considerable progress from their starting points at the time of placement.

Quality of care

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

Young people have a significant say in how the home is run. There is an ethos of on-going discussion between the manager, staff and young people. Each young person also has a key worker who helps to ensure their views are heard. Young people take part in a monthly house meeting. Young people behave well and they get on well with each other and with the staff. For example, one young person said, 'The staff are good listeners and they put me in the right mind. The other young people in the home are like my brothers, we get on really well together. I am learning to control my anger and this is getting a lot better. My education is improving all the time. I was only attending school for about an hour a day before, now I go to school every day. There is nothing to complain about in this home.'

The quality of communication between young people and staff is excellent and ensures that any problems are resolved at an early stage. Young people confirm they are aware of how to make a complaint. The manager spends time with young people in order to consult with them, to make sure that they are happy and content. There have been no complaints made to the home since the last inspection.

Young people benefit from good health care plans that focus on meeting their holistic health needs. Health care objectives are set with young people and are constantly reviewed to ensure young people's health needs are met. Young people have access to various medical professionals including a psychologist and staff support young people to attend appointments. Staff are trained in first aid and in the safe administration and recording of medication. Healthy living, diet and exercise are encouraged. Support is given to young people to explore health topics such as relationships, sexual health, smoking and alcohol consumption. As a result, the physical, emotional and psychological health of young people is promoted.

Staff work closely with education providers to ensure the individual educational needs of young people are met. They provide support to young people to reduce anxieties about school and to encourage full attendance. Staff have high aspirations for all young people and encourage them to explore all options and courses available. They also have ready access to a computer in the home on which they can access the internet. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their

educational potential.

Young people are provided with a good standard of accommodation, which is homely, decorated and furnished in accordance with young people's needs. The setup of the home enables young people to have privacy and appropriate areas are provided for education and meetings with, for example, social workers, friends and family.

Social diversity is demonstrated well through day-to-day care. Staff act as role models who teach the young people about the equal value of each individual. This enables young people to develop a positive self-view and have a better understanding of their own backgrounds.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that they are safe within their home and feel that the staff do their utmost to ensure that they understand all potential risks and can appreciate the steps taken to promote their safety. Staff have access to clear information, support, guidance and advice about child protection and safeguarding requirements. Staff understand their responsibility to protect young people and are able to demonstrate what actions they would take to keep young people safe. Staff are confident about their roles and responsibilities in all areas. This ensures that young people are safe and are cared for in line with their placement plan.

The home has a clear missing from home procedure that includes agreed protocols with the local police. These procedures provide details of prompt actions to be taken when young people go missing and include positive responses to returning young people. There have been no incidents of young people being missing from home since the previous inspection. Agreements with young people and the people they are visiting ensure staff know the whereabouts of young people when they are away from the home. All young people are provided with a mobile phone and £20 top up credits each month.

Respectful and warm relationships between staff and young people provide the basis for managing behaviour effectively. There are very few incidents of restraints and staff are clear that this is only used as a very last resort to prevent harm to young people. Methods such as rewards and sincere verbal praise encourage young people's positive behaviour; this assists them in accepting responsibility for their actions. Staff reinforce an anti-bullying culture and there have been no incidents of bullying behaviour since the last inspection. As a result, young people live in an environment where respect and trust are promoted between all parties. Young people are further protected by the organisation's robust recruitment procedures and where staff monitor any visitors to the home.

Regular fire safety checks, general checks and maintenance arrangements ensure

the home is physically safe and is kept safe. All staff have received fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. All staff and all four young people have been involved in fire drills and confirm they know what to do when the alarm goes off.

Leadership and management

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

No requirements or recommendations were made at the last inspection in February 2012. The Registered Manager is appropriately qualified and has an excellent range of relevant experience to guide her leadership of the staff team. She is competent and confident in her ability to promote positive outcomes for young people. The manager has exceptionally high expectations of her staff team and is proactive in ensuring all staff receive a full training programme to equip them with specific skills relevant to the young people accommodated. There is clear evidence of how the care and support provided by the whole staff team have improved outcomes for young people. There are clear and appropriate arrangements for covering the manager's absence.

The home's Statement of Purpose provides full information about the aims, objectives and care practices. These objectives are being utilised in everyday practice, ensuring young people feel safe, protected and well cared for. Young people confirmed that they were provided with a children's guide to the home upon admission.

The home employs an appropriate level of staffing. Young people are supported by a staff team which is comprised of a good mix of gender, race, age and experience. This helps young people learn about differences and they benefit from shared experiences such as different cultures and foods. When asked what was the best thing about the home, a member of staff stated, 'The staff group are great, we all get on really well together. I like to see a success story for young people and see them grow in confidence. We also get lots of opportunities to develop our practice.' Another member of staff stated, 'The high standards of practice and the way staff are supported to develop. It is a nice relaxed atmosphere in the home for the staff and young people to work and live together.' Both members of staff said, 'I can't think of anything negative to say about the home.'

New staff receive induction training which they complete in the appropriate timescale. All the established members of staff are qualified at level 3 in care of children and young people and one new member of staff is working towards it. The staff receive training in a wide range of subjects and they receive regular formal one to one supervision from a senior person. This covers an appropriate range of issues including an assessment of their work with each young person and a discussion of their own performance.

All staff attend monthly team meetings where they evaluate how young people's individual needs are being met and how their behaviours are being managed

consistently. As a result, staff have seen significant improvements in young people's engagement with staff and reductions in risk taking behaviours.

The manager has established robust relationships with the local police and a range of health and education professionals. The manager demonstrates excellent awareness of the development needs of the service and there is strong drive to improve care practices throughout. Quality assurance systems, in terms of monitoring under Regulation 34 by the manager and visits in line with Regulation 33 on behalf of the provider organisation, are extremely robust. Monitoring incorporates regular consultation with young people and reports reflect their views well. Where shortfalls are identified they are addressed quickly and thoroughly.

Young people's case file records and other written documentation are of an excellent standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. Good cross referencing of all documentation enables the management team and staff to evaluate and monitor young people's progress. 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. Young people know that they can have access to their records. The young people's individual case records reflect their development and progress.

All staff are clear in relation to their responsibilities of notifying appropriate authorities of any significant event that takes place. Any action needed following a significant event is followed up and recorded appropriately. This system further protects 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.