

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC023737
Inspection date	19/06/2012
Inspector	Paul Clark
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	07/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is part of a large organisation which operates within the South East of England providing residential care in 18 registered children's homes. The organisation have two schools which provide education for children with special educational needs. The home can accommodate up to three young people aged between 10 and 17 years of age that have suffered disruption in their lives.

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**.

The home provides young people with a good level of care. Young people feel safe and happy and enjoy positive relationships with staff. The home works well with partnership agencies in protecting young people and in promoting their welfare. Placing social workers value highly the level of care provided by the home. Education is well supported through the agencies own school provision. The staff team are well managed. There are good levels of training and ongoing supervision for staff. Young people are included in the day-to-day running of the home and there are opportunities in place for their views to be heard. Behaviour management is properly focussed and is delivered in the best interests of the young people. Management and staff ensure that diversity is celebrated and valued. Regard is given to a young person's particular needs arising from their heritage, culture or racial background. Staff have a sound understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding and in reducing risk. The statement of purpose and children's guides should be amended to ensure that they both display the same age range for the children accommodated. Children under the legal age should not be permitted to smoke in the internal or external areas of 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 children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their own health. NMS 6.2
- ensure that the children's home have a clear statement of purpose and that the age range of children in the statement is the same as that contained in the children's guide. NMS 13.1

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides young people with a high level of care which is based on their individual needs being well assessed and contained in placement plans which take into account all aspects of their social and personal requirements. Placing authorities observe that young people placed make excellent progress during their time at the home. Social workers commented that: 'They have changed an extremely vulnerable girl into a confident and happy young woman. We are delighted with the progress that has been made.' This level of care provides positive outcomes for young people. Placing authorities and parents comment positively on the way the home is managed and on the skills of the care staff.

Although young people are fully encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for their own health needs and how to make informed decisions about their lifestyle choices, all three of the children currently placed were smokers on admission to the home and continue to smoke. While the home tries to discourage young people from smoking, this is allowed in the garden of the premises. This has a potential negative impact on their future health. However, there has been substantial success in helping young people to cease their previous drug use and other areas of harmful behaviour. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health-related issues regarding emotional and psychological well-being and personal fitness and this results in positive health outcomes for young people. Young people are supported by staff in attending a local swimming pool, ice skating and in enjoying walking in the town and this increases young people's fitness levels and sense of enjoyment.

Young people are supported in achieving their educational potential by attending either of the agency's two educational facilities or by the provision of home tutoring. There is good communication between care and teaching staff and this ensures that care staff can support young people with their educational progress. One young person who had not attended formal education for long periods before coming to the home now attends school and has achieved significant educational progress. One young person has received home tutoring for the whole of the last academic year. Clearly written Pathway Plans have been put in place for progressing young people's ongoing training and development. Young people receive good support in developing life skills to assist them towards independence and moving on. A full programme of

activities is in place to support this. This includes financial management and practical skills within everyday living. Young people are encouraged to open savings accounts and to make practical decisions about clothing budgeting and food preparation.

Contact between young people and their families is fully supported by staff who give practical support in facilitating contact arrangements. Staff keep families well informed about their children's progress and families are always invited to attend reviews that are held in the home. One parent commented 'I am happy with all of the information I receive, I am kept fully informed.' Good links with their home helps young people to have an understanding of their identity and background and helps to maintain family relationships.

Quality of care

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

The home has a range of measures in place that are aimed at acknowledging young people's achievements and promoting their self-worth. One young person has received an achievement award from the agency and is proud to have been made a member of the Young Person's Forum which is a consultative body of the organisation. These measures not only empower young people but help them build on self-esteem and self-worth. Management and staff are consistent when engaging with young people or advocating on their behalf. This contributes towards an environment which enhances reassurance for young people and reinforces the key principles of building on trusting relationships. Relationships formed between staff and young people are strong. One young person stated, 'I love living here and all of the staff are kind and take good care of me.'

There is a behaviour management system in place which all staff and young people are familiar with. All staff are trained in the application of physical restraint although they will always try avoidance and distraction techniques in the first instance. Any event where physical restraint is used is appropriately recorded and systems of support for staff and young people are put in place. The boundaries instilled by staff are professional, balanced and fair and only agreed sanctions are applied and these applications are appropriately recorded. Young people are also supported in forming trusting and safe relationships with other adults within the organisation and the wider community. Young people learn to negotiate and develop confidence in expressing their views on aspects of how the home is organised and run. There are fortnightly house meetings and young people are able to make their views known about their care at these meetings, at key worker sessions and at their looked after children reviews. They feel that their views are valued and listened to. This means that they are able to affect change on matters that are important to them. They also appreciate why at times it may not be possible to act upon their wishes. Young people are provided with appropriate information on how to report any concerns. No complaints have been raised by young people, parents or other stakeholders since the time of the previous inspection but there is a formal complaints process and recording system in place should any complaint be raised. Young people comment

that they are able to talk with staff openly about anything that might be troubling them. All of these measures ensure that young people have a voice in the quality of their care and in the running of the home.

The home tries to ensure that young people become involved in community events and there are good relationships with neighbours. This helps young people to have a sense of responsibility for the community in which they live. The agency have an excellent working relationship with the local police and there are clear guidance arrangements in place for staff on the action to be taken in the event of a young person going missing.

The agency has a range of therapeutic services available to support young people. These include psychological assessment and various therapeutic inputs. These include art and music therapy. Comprehensive individual placement and daily living plans provide detailed information on how young people are to be cared for. Key workers and all staff are fully conversant with the delivery of the plans and in ensuring that agreed interventions and needs are met. Young people are actively involved in their care planning. This promotes confidence in having a say in their own life. Young people state that they feel safe in speaking out at care plan review meetings and in other forums where their care is discussed. Placing authorities commented positively on the high standard of the home's placement plans which fully detail the agreed therapeutic interventions to be applied. These plans are effectively reviewed thereby ensuring that young people's ongoing and changing needs are fully addressed.

Young people's physical, emotional well-being and welfare are well promoted. Young people are all registered with a local general practitioner and attend routine dental and sight check-ups. They also have access to a range of specialist services providing medical, psychiatric and psychological support. Staff are trained in first aid and have excellent knowledge of the home's robust procedures for the administration of medication. These measures ensure that children's medication provision is effectively monitored.

Staff actively promote education as part of preparation for adulthood and provide young people with practical and emotional support. They have an excellent understanding of young people's ongoing educational and vocational training plans and they provide consistent and meaningful guidance. Young people are supported in pursuing their own interests and hobbies. They are also introduced to and are offered a wide range of new experiences which helps them to develop new skills and increase in self-confidence. These have included such pursuits as gardening, craftwork and cooking. This ensures that they are encouraged to engage in elements of their lifestyle which are of particular enjoyment to them.

Management and staff ensure that diversity is celebrated and valued, whilst being resourceful in challenging any form of discrimination. High regard is given to young people's particular needs, arising from their heritage, culture, or linguistic backgrounds. Staff work to meet these needs positively, with care, consideration and sensitivity.

Young people are encouraged to visit the home before their arrival and they are able to make early choices about the décor and furnishing of their rooms and other elements of their proposed care. Young people's bedrooms are well decorated and furnished and they are able to display their personal effects. This ensures that young people have a feeling of ownership about the home. This is further encouraged by weekly house meetings where young people can express any concerns and make choices about food, planning activities or choices about their day to day living. The living environment is homely and provides a high standard of accommodation both internally and externally. Maintenance arrangements promptly address damage and breakages to maintain a safe environment. This ensures that young people enjoy an excellent standard of living environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has robust systems and policies in place which help to keep young people safe. Young people feel safe and are safe. Staff receive good training on safeguarding policies and procedures and this training is appropriately updated. Staff have access to clear information about child protection and safeguarding requirements and they demonstrate a sound understanding of the action to take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. The agency has a close working relationship with the local designated safeguarding officer and this ensures that its knowledge and understanding of child protection is continually being developed.

There is a close working relationship with the local police and this had led to a clear policy, procedure and recording method to be followed should a child be missing. This is known by all staff. Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerabilities and are very clear what action to take should such an incident occur. The home has a clear policy on how bullying is to be addressed and a recording system for the same, there have been no recorded incidents of bullying since the time of the last inspection. Children report that they feel safe in the home and they are confident that any incidents of bullying would be effectively dealt with by staff.

The privacy of young people is respected and information is confidentially handled. Staff protocol ensures that a young person's privacy is respected whilst there are structures in place to allow staff emergency access to bedrooms and bathrooms should the need arise. Staff ensure that they do not enter young people's rooms without knocking. Young people's care records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. A good balance is achieved between respecting young people's wish for privacy, ensuring their safety and encouraging their appropriate participation in activities so as to promote contact with their peers.

Effective behaviour management systems are in place which are properly monitored by senior management. As previously stated, staff are trained in a recognised

method of physical intervention but the emphasis is on prevention and distraction to minimise incidents. Although the number of recorded incidents is low any such incidents and the actions taken in response are properly recorded and young people and staff are properly supported following any such event. Detailed risk assessments are in place which direct and guide staff in supporting young people both within and outside of the home, for example, on trips to external activities. These are not restrictive and are planned to meet young people's individualised needs whilst at the same time keeping them safe.

Internally and externally the physical environment is safe, appropriately secure without being restrictive, and is well maintained. There are established systems and structures to maintain safe practices and fulfil health and safety obligations. There are robust fire safety arrangements which include, staff and young people being familiar with the actions they should take in the case of a fire. Young people benefit from a stable staff team with few personnel changes. Staff working with young people in the home are carefully selected and vetted and young people are included in the selection process as far as possible. No visitor to the home is allowed unsupervised access to the young people. All of these measures help to ensure young people's safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

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

There are strong systems leadership and management of the home which ensures that young people receive a high level of care and support from a well organised staff team. There are good systems of communication both within the management and staff group, the teaching staff of the agency and with the partnership agencies involved with the young people, including the police. The systems ensure that staff, social workers and families are well informed about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Placing agencies say that there is an excellent level of information communication provided by the home.

Staff receive fortnightly one to one supervision and are confident in the management support that they receive. There is a comprehensive staff induction programme and ongoing informal supervision arrangements. The staff team are well balanced with staff of both genders. The deployment and numbers of staff on duty at any one time is based upon the needs of the young people. The management team ensures that staffing levels take into account extra responsibilities, for example, when staff are representing young people at their looked after children reviews and attending school meetings additional staff are deployed. Staff receive training in all of the key areas applicable to their work with young people. Young people say that there is always enough staff on duty and that staff are helpful and available to deal with any concerns they may have during day or night. Training opportunities for staff are extensive and wide ranging and the agency has its own training section. Staff are supported in obtaining professionally recognised qualifications. Staff also receive ongoing training and mentoring by external trainers. All management and staff undertake an annual development programme which identifies their training and

development needs. Staff demonstrate a wealth of knowledge about young people's needs. The skills, experience and backgrounds among the staff team are diverse and wide ranging. Models of therapeutic support are available to young people.

The monitoring of care is undertaken via visits and reports required under Regulations 33 and 34 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Management are consistent in challenging and evaluating the operation of the service. Outcomes for young people are central to management review which has led to changes in care practice.

The statement of purpose is appropriately reviewed and is up to date. The aims and objectives of the service are clearly specified and applied. The children's guide contains a wealth of information to help young people settle in during the early stages of their admission. However, the statement of purpose and the guide gives varying statements about the age range of children that the home accommodates. Effective systems are in place for reviewing and updating statutory guidance and records. The home's clear philosophy, shared values and strong management combine to ensure that each young person is valued and nurtured. The detailed planning of each young person's care, combined with the effective use, when appropriate, of internal and external professional support ensures that each young person, not only has their identified needs met, but is encouraged to achieve their full potential. Placing authorities express a high level of satisfaction regarding the leadership and management of the home and with the high level of care provided by the home for the young people placed.

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.