

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC024808
Inspection date	09/10/2012
Inspector	Dawn Bennett
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is registered to accommodate up to four young people of either gender. The service is owned by a private company. The purpose of the home is to offer young people a service which provides semi-independent living in a supported environment.

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 make clear and positive progress in this home. They are suitably challenged and effectively supported to develop their confidence, abilities and understanding of themselves and the world around them. They are protected from harm by a competent and skilled staff team. Risks are assessed and young people are given appropriate opportunities to develop independence that means they progress successfully into adulthood. The home's safety practices are robust and well documented. Young people have clearly been enabled to take charge of their own lives in a positive and productive manner. One young person stated: 'Living here is like being in a mini version of the real world. I have been in care since I was eleven and this is the best home I have experienced. The Registered Manager is doing a brilliant job.' The key strength of this home is the staff team and the partnership work they undertake with other agencies. The individual needs and aspirations of young people lie at the heart of their care and results in good outcomes for young people. As a result of this inspection one requirement and four recommendations have been made. These are: for vacant posts and senior posts to be recruited to in a timely manner; for the refurbishment and redecoration of the home to be completed; for staff appraisals to take place; for a programme of training to be available to staff; for young people have access to a range of educational resources beyond the school day.

Areas for improvement

Statutory Requirements

This section sets out the actions which must be taken so that the registered person/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The registered person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
25 (2001)	ensure that at all times, having regard to regulation 25 (1) (a) and (b), a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons are working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated (NMS 10.3)
- ensure young people have access to a range of educational resources to support their learning and have opportunities beyond the school day to engage in activities which promote learning (NMS 8.2)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and this appraisal takes into account any views of the children the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- ensure there is a good quality learning and development programme which staff are supported to undertake. It includes, post qualifying training and in-service training to enhance individual skills and to keep staff up-to-date with professional and legal developments. 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 and reflects the policies, legal obligations and business needs of the home (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people feel welcomed when they first arrive at the home and they quickly settle in. They understand the purpose of the home and the aims and objectives of their placement. As a result they make good progress. A young person stated: 'This is an outstanding home. I have had a brilliant time since arriving. The other home I was in was judged to be outstanding but after being here I don't understand why. I feel more at home here than any other home I have been in. They are really big on you developing and becoming independent and your own person. This home is really

big on trust. They explain clearly what you have to achieve to move on.'

The majority of young people have good attendance and make good progress in further education or employment. When this good progress is interrupted, for example, because of inappropriate behaviour, young people are successfully supported to re-engage. If young people arrive at the home without education or employment or if there are restrictions on them accessing education or employment they are proactively supported within the home. They gain productive and valuable life skills by working to a weekly planned programme of tasks and activities. This helps them prepare for fulltime education and employment as well as adulthood.

As a result all young people develop independence skills that successfully prepare them for adult life. The environment of the home and the staff team promote young people to become active, independent and to live within their financial means within their local community. For example, they learn to use public transport to access a range of health and leisure resources. They learn to manage money to save, pay bills, shop and budget for the future. A social worker stated: 'I don't think they could of improved any aspect of their care. I would place with them again. The young person is continuing to do well now he has left care and a lot of that has to do with the work staff did with him whilst he was at the home. I was always very pleased with the standard of care.'

Young people use the local library. They are currently reliant on this resource for access to a computer and the internet. This is because the home's computer is broken and has been for a significant length of time. Although using the library is appropriate and a good resource for young people in the future it is not always available. It also does not enable staff to teach young people how to use the computer safely because it is difficult to discuss some private, sensitive issues in such a public space.

Quality of care

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

Young people felt strongly that a key strength of the service was the staff team. The staff team seek the views, wishes and feelings of young people through young people's meetings, key work sessions and during day-to-day discussions. There is open, honest dialogue between staff and young people, which addresses difficulties sensitively and celebrates success proactively. As a result there are positive, constructive relationships between staff and young people which are valued by all.

Young people are actively involved in their review meetings and are consulted regularly about their future plans. Reviews are held within timescales. All young people have detailed placement plans and where appropriate pathway plans which are regularly reviewed. These ensure the staff team are well informed about the assessed needs of individuals and that their progress is monitored. They capture the social and emotional needs of young people as well as their health and welfare needs.

Staff practice is consistent and in line with the aims and objectives of the placement plans. They encourage a healthy environment through diet and exercise. They also promote the importance of education and employment and support them to attend on a sustained basis.

Significant work has been undertaken to improve the furnishings and décor of the home. The staff and young people have been proactive in helping to complete the work. Carpets and old furniture has been replaced, rooms have been painted by staff and young people and some imaginative touches to rooms have made the home feel individual and welcoming. Some work requested remains outstanding for example staff bedrooms are yet to be decorated and skirting boards throughout the home have not been painted. Blinds have been trialled in one young person's bedroom with a view to them being fitted in all the young people's bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe. One young person stated: 'I am relaxed here and being here is more enjoyable than any other home I have lived in. There is a feeling of safety and happiness. I feel safe because of the staff who are here. I get on well with them. The staff want to be here and want to spend time with you which makes my experience happy and fun.'

The safety and rights of young people are promoted. The staff team use consistently good parenting skills to safeguard young people while supporting them to develop responsible independence skills. Young people are safe and feel safe. There are policies and procedures in place that are regularly reviewed and address bullying, managing inappropriate behaviours, making a safeguarding referral, dealing with missing persons, staff recruitment, complaints and health and safety. These underpin staff induction and the programme of on-going mandatory training. In addition, all young people have detailed risk assessments that link to their placement plans. This results in staff having a good working knowledge of safeguarding and health and safety practices, which enables them to safeguard young people in their care.

Staff view young people positively and there is a relaxed atmosphere and staff and young people enjoy each other's company. Staff have all received training in physical intervention but rarely use it. Consequences are also rarely used; staff talk to young people to help them to understand the relationship between their feelings and their behaviour. Behaviour that challenges is managed competently and professionally and in partnership with other agencies where appropriate.

Staff take appropriate action if a young person goes missing, in line with clear procedures and practice specific to each young person. Young people are aware of the actions staff will take and are encouraged to keep in contact with staff even if they are choosing not to return. Staff are successful in reducing negative behaviours through discussions and developing positive relationships. However, when incidents

do occur they are managed effectively with clear communication taking place between external agencies.

Leadership and management

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

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the practice and ethos of this service. It provides a detailed account of how young people will be cared for in the home and the expectations of staff to meet the needs of the young people. A guide booklet on the home is also provided to young people. This has recently been reviewed with the help of the young people living in the home. It contains appropriate information in a style suitable for young people to read and understand.

Staff are supported in their roles through regular staff meetings and supervision. Staff do not, however, have their performance individually and formally appraised. There is clear and consistent guidance to staff contained in the policies and procedures. The organisation further supports staff through induction and mandatory training. However, the staff team have not experienced any additional training. Either in relation to: the specific needs of a child placed; the specific role or position of a member of staff; or to progress on beyond NVQ level 3 or equivalent. This means that training and development is not always effective in supporting staff to provide a good quality service to young people.

There are established quality assurance systems, which monitor the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose and highlight areas of strengths and areas for development. Records are regularly signed by the Registered Manager and external checks from a senior officer of the organisation are regularly undertaken and provide further feedback on how the home is operating.

This home has operated for a significant period of time with reduced staffing numbers and without its full quota of senior staff. It is a credit to the core group of remaining staff that good outcomes for young people have still been achieved. They cover the vacant shifts or use the organisation's bank of staff to ensure consistency of staffing and practice. Internal moves, where full notice has not been worked and slow recruitment processes have caused vacant posts to remain.

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.