

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025420
Inspection date	03/02/2014
Inspector	Nick Veysey
Type of inspection	Interim
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/09/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a children's home for six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and drug or alcohol dependence, who come from many parts of England and Wales. The home is one of several owned by a private company.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Good progress	The children's home has demonstrated continued improvement in quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the large majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Satisfactory progress	The children's home has maintained quality of care and outcomes for children and young people and where appropriate has addressed all requirements and the majority of recommendations that were raised at the previous inspection.
Inadequate progress	The children's home has failed to address one or more requirements and/or has not met the majority of recommendations and/or the quality of care and outcomes for children and young people have declined since the last full inspection.

Progress

Since their previous inspection the service is judged to be making **good progress**.

At the last full inspection in September 2013 the overall effectiveness of the children's home was judged to be adequate; but outcomes for young people and the quality of care provided were good. The areas of improvement related to the management of some incidents involving young people, staff training, written records, the Statement of Purpose, and the standard of the accommodation.

The children's home is making good progress. It continues to make a positive difference to young people's lives and secure improvements in the quality of care it provides and outcomes for young people. The manager has taken the necessary action to address all the weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

Young people have made very good progress in all aspects of their lives since they moved in. They are building positive and suitable relationships with adults and other young people. They are making significant and continuous improvements in their health, education, dealing with difficult feelings constructively, and developing a better understanding of their backgrounds, religion and culture. For example, one young person is developing a better understanding about her heritage through

positive contact with her community and wider family. She is learning the language used in the community to enable her to speak with her grandfather in his first language. Young people are making positive choices about their lives and feel able to accept guidance and support from staff. They are making good choices not to get involved in risky behaviours that previously had a damaging impact on their safety, including sexual exploitation, being in a gang, and using drugs and alcohol.

Young people know that staff are interested in their lives and are concerned about their welfare. Staff have positive relationships with young people and clearly enjoy spending time with them. They make every effort to find out what is important to individual young people, understanding their needs, culture, circumstances, talents and interests. The manager and staff have consistently high aspirations for young people to do well. They want young people to be 'the best they can possibly be' and are committed to helping young people to lead safe, happy and fulfilling lives, regardless of the challenges young people may have faced. They fight young people's corners to make sure they get the best possible support and services, for example challenging the barriers at schools and colleges to young people's participation in full time education.

The staffs consistently apply good safe caring practices and as a result vulnerable young people feel safe. The staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and risks relating to child sexual exploitation. They understand the safeguarding procedures, know exactly what they need to do when they have concerns about young people, and report all serious incidents that may impact on young people's safety to the relevant people, including the local authority designated officer.

Staff use detailed risk assessments to identify specific risks and develop of effective plans to keep individual young people safe; for example the risks of child sexual exploitation and young people going missing have significantly reduced. The staff ensure risk assessments and management plans are up to date, take into account any changes, fully address young people's needs. This includes learning lessons from serious incidents to help them better support young people. For example, staff have developed a more effective approach in helping a young person manage her frustrations and feelings by enabling her to talk through what is wrong or take some time out to chill in her room or go for a walk to clear her head. Young people's behaviour has significantly improved over time. They get on very well with staff and each other. They benefit from a nurturing and structured environment where positive behaviour is actively promoted through praise and rewards. Young people feel fairly treated. The staff apply reasonable and consistent boundaries to help young people understand what is expected of them. The behaviour management records now show young people's views about what happened as well as when they do not want to make a comment.

Staff have a very clear understanding of young people's particular needs and vulnerabilities relating to their level of understanding and emotional maturity. This enables them to ensure young people are safe at home and in the community. The staff effectively balance the need for protection with enabling young people to take

reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. Care planning is usually effective to make sure that young people receive support tailored to their personal needs. However, recently the provider agreed to look after a young person without fully taking into account the range of needs and potential risks to the existing group of young people. The Registered Manager has concerns that the young person is not compatible with the other young people and is reviewing the suitability of the young person's placement with the placing authority.

Staff have good training opportunities to build their individual skills and knowledge relevant to the young people they are caring for and their specific needs and difficulties, including training in safeguarding, behaviour management, and child sexual exploitation. Staff effectively apply their learning to their day-to-day work with young people.

The home's Statement of Purpose is now up to date and provides an accurate account of its services and objectives. The manager has set up a system for monitoring the quality of the written records. Although this has led to some improvements, the quality of the children's records is not consistently good enough to contribute effectively to an understanding of young people's lives. Some of the records lack the detail to provide a clear picture of young people's experiences and do not analyse their progress and effectiveness of the support they receive. Also some records use negative and judgemental language that may stigmatise young people rather than provide a fair and accurate account of their experiences.

Young people live in a large comfortable family house. It is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard and meets young people's individual needs, personalities and tastes. Young people's bedrooms are tidy and decorated to a good standard. The bathrooms are clean and much better maintained, and the empty bedrooms are suitably decorated and furnished to provide a nice environment for young people moving in.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure when reaching a decision about the suitability of a placement for a child, the potential risks and range of needs of other children living in the home are fully taken into account (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.2)
- ensure written records contribute to an understanding of a child's life; provide a detailed picture of the child's experiences and circumstances; a thorough analysis of their progress; and are written in non-stigmatising language. (NMS 22)

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 progress made by the provider since the last full inspection, identifies any further strengths, any areas for improvement and makes judgements as outlined in the *Inspection of children's homes – framework for inspection*.