

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025712
Inspection date	12/12/2013
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	04/02/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

Website: www.ofsted.gov.uk

This document may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that the information quoted is reproduced without adaptation and the source and date of publication are stated.

Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a charity. It provides accommodation for up to two young people with emotional and behaviour difficulties and/or learning disabilities, on a medium or long-term basis.

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 a good experience that significantly improves the quality of life both for young people and their families. As a result, young people achieve exceptional outcomes from their starting points. The home can demonstrate the impact it has had in supporting this excellent progress.

Staff deliver highly personalised and creative care planning and practice which leads to considerable personal achievements for each young person. However, one development need is to ensure that young people's placement plans are kept fully up-to-date, and in a format they can understand and engage with.

The accommodation and facilities are of a high standard and provide an environment designed to meet the needs of and develop young people. Young people feel valued, respected and fully understood as individuals. This is promoted by a management and staff team that demonstrates enthusiasm, consistency, warmth and positive regard.

Young people live in an extremely safe, caring and supportive environment. They feel that their lives have improved with the skilled support of staff, and clearly indicate that they feel safe here. Consequently, all young people's significantly challenging behaviours have ceased since the last inspection.

Monitoring of young people's progress and development is good and the manager has a very sound understanding of the strengths of the home and areas for

development. However some shortfalls are identified. Five recommendations are therefore raised in order to further drive forward improvement for young people.

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 are helped to understand how to keep themselves safe outside the home, with particular reference to comprehensive risk assessment and management plans in relation to swimming (NMS 4.4)
- ensure that the home contributes to the development of each child's care plan, including the pathway plan for 'eligible care leavers', with particular reference to timely and effective interventions with placing authorities to ensure pathway plans are in place (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that the manager regularly monitors all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, with particular regard to ensuring placement plans are up-to-date and that young people are engaged with the planning process (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care (NMS 25.1)
- ensure that each child's placement plan is monitored by a key worker within the home, with particular regard to ensuring it is up-to-date in all aspects. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make exceptional and enduring progress across all areas of their development. The support they receive from the home has made a huge difference in their lives. They have a full, structured diary including social activities and community presence. Young people are appropriately supported by the home to address their communication skills and this greatly enhances their emotional well-being. As one independent reviewing officer said: 'The greatest progress has been with his social skills, his communication skills and his interaction with other people. He used to be a very introverted boy. The home has supported him all the way with his hobbies and his community projects. He's definitely grown as a person.'

Young people have excellent attendance and participation in education. This is supported by daily communication between school and education staff, allowing for any concerns or achievements to be shared, further promoting young people's well-being and attainments. Shared aspirations and targets for young people ensure a

holistic approach to developing social and life skills and educational ability. For example, young people have been successful in attaining Duke of Edinburgh awards, mentoring other young people in work settings, and by showing enterprise in starting small local businesses.

Young people's previously highly challenging behaviours have completely ceased since the last inspection. They are happy, relaxed, confident and settled in the home. As a social worker confirmed about one young person: 'His progress in managing his behaviour more constructively has been massive. This is a key change as he previously represented a huge risk to both himself and others. All his challenging behaviours have massively reduced.'

Young people enjoy significantly improved home contact. This ensures that important attachments are nurtured, and further promotes young people's strong sense of well-being. As one external professional commented: 'It's fantastic. He's come on in leaps and bounds. He gets on brilliantly with the neighbours. Communication between the home and his mother is fantastic. The home in general is brilliant.'

Young people's all round independence skills have increased. This includes accomplishing practical tasks such learning to cook and undertaking household tasks. Increasingly young people are successfully developing their communication skills, language ability and general behaviour. These are important aspects of coping with transition and adulthood. With respect to young people with complex needs, these small improvements represent big steps in terms of their emotional literacy, self-determination and independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with all the staff. Staff encourage them to have high aspirations. Achievements and awards are celebrated and on display in the home. Staff are passionate about supporting young people in their education and patiently encourage them every step of the way. One external professional confirmed: 'There's a really good triangle between the home, school and mum.'

Staff provide completely consistent and clear boundaries. These help the young people to feel safe and secure so that they can progress. Staff employ highly effective and creative behaviour management strategies which are tailored to individual young people's unique needs and comprehension. As one independent reviewing officer said: 'It's helped that he has such a settled staff team. It's perfect for him. They do a really good job. Staff care so much about him and it shows.'

Young people make a significant contribution to the daily running of the home. Their views, wishes and feelings are sought and listened to in matters such as personalising their bedrooms and choosing the new kitchen for the home. As one member of staff said: 'The young people are at the centre of everything we do. We

can really focus on them and personalise their care. We give them loads of input and allow them to have full rein in their choices about the home.' However, despite that inclusive approach, there is insufficient written evidence of direct work with young people about their placement planning and important decisions in relation to their future care. Their placement plans are overly complex, not kept fully up-to-date and are not easily accessible for them. This compromises their effective engagement with the planning and review of their care.

Staff ensure that young people have many opportunities to interact within the community through clubs, organised events and attendance at local festivals. This has been instrumental in helping them to significantly improve their communication skills and self-confidence. Staff undertake individual work with young people about equality and diversity issues. This encourages them to develop a better understanding of the diverse society they live within.

Staff establish good partnership working with external agencies and relatives to secure positive outcomes for young people. This is enthusiastically endorsed by one social worker: 'I am unashamedly biased when it comes to this home. This is the best placement I've ever worked with and I've been a social worker for 25 years. It's been wonderful for my young person.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home makes outstanding provision for safeguarding young people's welfare. Young people's behaviour and demeanours clearly show that they feel very safe in the home, and have staff that they trust to go to if they are worried about anything. As one independent reviewing officer confirmed: 'I think they keep him safe there. They know his limitations and the risks. The staff know him really well and have helped him to think about his vulnerabilities. His relationships with staff are very good. He has developed long term relationships of trust with them.'

Comprehensive individual risk assessments and risk management plans ensure that young people are protected, while enabling them to take reasonable risks in line with their abilities. This helps them to grow and develop. As one relative commented: 'He gets on with all the staff as I do as well. He's got no real sense of danger and I know that staff have worked closely with him around this so that he's as safe as he can be. They all meet his needs really well.' However, one shortfall is identified in relation to a lack of thoroughness in the home's generic risk assessment about swimming. This has not adversely impacted in any way on young people in the home though.

Previously highly challenging behaviours by young people have completely ceased since the last inspection. Consequently, young people do not feel the need to run away, and staff do not have to use restraint or sanctions in response to young people's behaviour. This confirms the young people's strong sense of safety and security in the home. It is testament to the home's highly positive and successful

behaviour management strategies. As one social worker said about their young person: 'He's absolutely safe in the home as he's on two to one staffing, with a gradual move to one to one staffing under careful risk assessment. His progress in managing his behaviour more constructively has been massive. This is a key change as he previously represented a huge risk to both himself and others. All his challenging behaviours have massively reduced. Staff have worked with him tirelessly to help him to manage his behaviour and anxieties.'

Staff have an excellent awareness of safeguarding, particularly in relation to issues that may affect young people with complex needs. They are very alert to young people's vulnerabilities and risks of harm, and are knowledgeable about how to implement safeguarding children procedures. Staff files indicate careful vetting of workers to ensure that unsuitable people do not have access to the young people. This further promotes their protection. The security of the building, and policies and procedures all work to keep young people safe from danger and abuse in the home itself.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a strong Registered Manager with a wealth of relevant knowledge and experience. She has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service, and has realistic and challenging plans in place to develop it. She has developed sound partnerships with placing authorities, and takes action as required to ensure that young people receive the service that they should. That said, although the manager has recently been assertive about a poor leaving care service from one placing authority, it has not been a timely enough intervention to ensure that pathway plans are in place for all relevant young people.

The manager employs generally strong and effective quality assurance processes. She has developed a good range of monitoring activities to track the quality of care and outcomes. She can thus easily demonstrate the positive difference the home has made. Independent scrutiny of the home is comprehensive and provides an effective driver for improvement. It includes consultation with a wide number of individuals including young people, social workers and relatives. Young people are invited to contribute to staff appraisals so that the manager has a more rounded understanding of how individual staff's care is experienced by those young people. However, she has failed to address some limited direct work by staff with young people to help them to understand their care planning, and to ensure that placement plans are regularly up-dated.

Young people enjoy a warm and welcoming home environment that is maintained to a high standard and entirely geared to their needs. Staff support has enabled young people to establish very positive relationships with neighbours so that they feel valued in their local area. This helps young people be aware of their impact on others and to develop community awareness.

The home benefits from a stable, enthusiastic and highly committed staff team which works collaboratively to provide consistency and stability. Staff are focussed on improving the home for the young people so that their outcomes are constantly getting better. Supervision is completed regularly and is appreciated by staff as a useful tool to help them to undertake their role. Staff's individual training requirements are met, including additional specific training to meet the evolving needs of young people. As a result, staff have a real sense of purpose and are able to practice in a clearly defined, goal-orientated manner.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.