

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC025713
Inspection date	25/07/2012
Inspector	Stella Lovie
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	29/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is owned and operated by a private organisation. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for two young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties.

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**.

Children and young people are cared for in a warm and nurturing environment with clear boundaries. As a result, they make good progress in relation to their starting points across all aspects of their welfare and development. For some children and young people, this progress is extremely good and this is endorsed by external professionals and relatives.

Progress is underpinned by effective, good quality support from staff which takes full account of each of the individual needs of the children and young people. Children and young people are all positive about the quality of the care that they receive. That care is enhanced by a strong commitment by staff to principles of equality and diversity.

Children and young people report a strong sense of safety in this home and feel that staff manage potentially unsafe situations well. Staff demonstrate a good working knowledge about safeguarding. They work sensitively with the children and young people to help them to understand life style choices that they make. This ensures that risk is managed effectively.

Management arrangements are robust and create an environment where children and young people are able to make positive changes. Managers effectively tackle weaknesses with a view to securing improvement. However, this inspection has identified three shortfalls. These are a lack of consultation with relatives in Regulation 33 visits, a lack of regularity of the Registered Manager's supervision, and

staff not always signing the supervision tracker to confirm that they have received supervision. The impact is not significant in terms of the quality of care provided.

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
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out the visit shall interview with their consent and in private such parents and relatives as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	24/10/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that suitable arrangements exist for the professional supervision of the registered person (NMS 19.3)
- ensure that the written supervision record is signed by the member of staff at the end of supervision. (NMS 19.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people make good progress towards feeling positive about themselves. They are assisted in this by regular individual work that helps them to achieve a thorough understanding of their background and why they are looked after. This is further promoted by use of memory aids like photograph scrapbooks and life story work. As a result their behaviour and overall demeanour improves. As one relative says: 'the home is doing a great job in every way, couldn't do it any better. (Name) likes living here as he's told me so. It's like home from home. It's a really good experience for him. His behaviour has got better, the change in him is unbelievable. He's improved in every way since he's been living in the home'.

Children and young people are supported to understand the benefits of a healthy lifestyle. They enjoy well balanced diets which help to promote their good health and well-being. They are encouraged as appropriate to take responsibility for their own health. For example, some children and young people are expert in the management

of their specific health needs and help to train and assess the staff in learning those skills. As a result, they feel confident and happy with the care they receive: 'I want to stay at (name of home) because I like the staff. I know everybody. I like my bedroom. I have settled in, staff check on me at night so I feel safe'. Other children and young people make progress in changing unhealthy lifestyles in relation to drug and alcohol use. However, not all of them have been able to give up smoking despite the provision of cessation programmes. Staff continue to use their positive relationships with them to promote the benefits of these services.

Children and young people are involved fully in the day-to-day and more complex decisions about their lives in accordance with their age and understanding. For example, they are aided by Children's Rights Officers to express their views about placement decisions. This helps them to develop trust and confidence in the adults around them.

Children and young people make positive progress in their educational achievements while living in this home. For example, some of them are successful in obtaining awards for excellent progress in school. Other children and young people have obtained college placements in relation to their chosen careers. This helps them to build up their self-esteem and to feel confident about the future.

Children and young people are encouraged to participate as appropriate in structured independent living programmes. These are designed to help them acquire the necessary practical and emotional skills to move forward into adult life. When cooperation is limited with that structured approach, staff work thoughtfully with those individuals through creative and fun activities in the home as an alternative way of practising the skills. For example, some children and young people are organising a social event for a number of people which is helping to develop their budgeting, organising and catering abilities.

Children and young people enjoy positive contact with family and friends with the support of staff. This ensures that important attachments are nurtured and maintained.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people enjoy warm and positive relationships with staff. They speak highly of the support and guidance they receive. As one young person comments: 'I think it's good here. Staff are always there if you need them and I find them helpful. They put consequences in place which is good and they're always fair. I rate this home 10 out of 10'. These relationships help to develop children and young people's life skills and enable them to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes in all cases.

Staff use individualised positive behaviour strategies which are successful in managing conflict and helping children and young people to regulate their behaviour.

As one external professional says: '(Name) has come on a long way since being in this placement in terms of his behaviour which is all evidence of the positive nurturing he is receiving'.

Children and young people's views and wishes play a significant role in the running of the home and the delivery of care. For example, they make choices about the decoration of the home and take part in various garden projects. Some children and young people are also actively involved in training and assessing staff competency in various care tasks. As a result, they feel very much at home and have opportunities to develop new skills.

Children and young people have a good understanding of their rights and how to make a complaint. Where complaints have been made and upheld, staff learn and act upon the lessons from those situations. This again evidences the strength and professionalism of the relationships between children, young people and staff.

Placement plans are personalised and detailed. They contain crucial information about individual triggers and identify personal goals and aspirations. The plans are regularly reviewed with the children and young people so that they are live documents designed to help them progress towards their targets.

Staff are proactive in addressing challenges and barriers to educational progress and achievement. For some children and young people this has been a long process in getting them to attend courses with a view to thinking about their future career options. As a result, they have been successful in gaining relevant college placements. Other children and young people make significant progress more quickly from their starting points. As a head teacher comments: 'although (name) has been with us for a relatively short period of time, and has undergone major changes in his home life, the progress is apparent. He can be trusted to work and play with the younger pupils and has been an excellent table monitor at lunch time'.

Staff ensure that equality and diversity issues are clearly identified in care planning and actively addressed in daily living. For example, opportunities are taken to discuss racism in the context of football. Similarly, children and young people are involved in planning a summer meal based around the Olympic theme which raises awareness about different cultures and societies through quiz questions and food. This helps to promote their tolerance and respect for others and broadens their horizons.

Children and young people benefit from ready access to a wide range of specialist services like drug and alcohol workers and in-house psychological support. These help to secure a holistic approach to their care. For example, the home has a particular link with a local police officer who calls in to see the children and young people on an informal basis. He comments that: 'the home functions well. They support the young people well. The staff are always very supportive of police actions. We work well together. It's a nice environment there and I always get a great reception when I call in'. As a result, children and young people develop a more positive view of the police and have been able to share worries they have about issues in the wider community.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people report a strong sense of safety in the home. They say that they feel comfortable telling staff about things that upset or worry them, and are confident that staff will act to support them. This is endorsed by feedback from relatives and professionals.

Children and young people have care plans that clearly identify their individual risks and protective factors. These are regularly monitored and reviewed to reflect progress or where new concerns are identified. For example, some children and young people historically have been at risk of sexual exploitation. This risk is carefully monitored at all times in consultation with relevant agencies and with the individuals themselves. As a result, that risk is minimised and well managed.

The home has an effective missing from home policy that is compliant with the local police protocol. Its efficiency is reflected in the fact that there have been no episodes of children and young people going missing since the last inspection. This is further aided by strong and proactive relationships with the police and other safeguarding agencies which together serve to support and promote the safety of the children and young people.

Staff are competent in recognising the particular vulnerabilities of the children and young people in their care. Interventions are creative and thoughtful. They are underpinned by clear risk assessments. For example, staff work sensitively with some children and young people to help them to understand potentially harmful choices they make about relationships and sexual health. This work proceeds appropriately at the pace of those children and young people, and is tailored carefully to their emotional and cognitive abilities. As a result, their choices are respected, but they are also provided with space and opportunity to reflect usefully upon them.

Positive, friendly but professional relationships between staff and the children and young people underpin effective behaviour management based on praise, incentives and individual targets. This results in minimal use of physical restraints and sanctions. The home exercises a zero tolerance approach to bullying which is successful in enabling children and young people to live without fear and intimidation.

The home environment is physically safe and appropriately secure. Regular testing of gas and electrical appliances and the implementation of health and safety risk assessments ensure that children and young people, staff and visitors are sufficiently safeguarded.

Leadership and management

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

Children and young people live in a well-managed and resourced home. Their care is provided by sufficient staff who are qualified, trained and experienced. The staff team is stable and well-motivated. They are confident enough to challenge each others practice in staff meetings and through use of practice tools like the shift analysis form. This ensures that they learn from each other and work to their strengths so that children and young people receive continuity of care.

All the care staff receive regular supervision which they report is helpful to them to undertake their role effectively. However, the Registered Manager does not always receive her supervision regularly, and care staff do not always sign the supervision tracker to confirm that they have received their supervision. These shortfalls do not impact significantly on the quality of care provided.

The Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced. She is supported in the management of the home by two strong senior members of staff. Together they make an effective management team.

The Registered Manager ensures that the home complies with the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide. This means that children and young people, staff and placing authorities are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and the services and facilities it provides.

The Registered Manager has a good awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and has written development plans in place accordingly. For example, all of the staff have personal development plans linked with their appraisals. This ensures that staff remain up to date with professional and legal developments and that individual training needs are identified and met. Concerns and complaints are dealt with robustly and resolved in consultation with all relevant agencies and the person making the complaint. Leaders and managers ensure that appropriate learning takes place as a consequence.

The Registered Manager has good quality assurance arrangements through monthly monitoring of the quality of care. She uses a range of analysis tools to monitor children and young people's progress and identify trends and patterns in behaviour. This helps to ensure that staff interventions are as effective as possible. For example, she has undertaken a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis of the staff team with a view to targeted development of individual staff, and the team as a whole. As a result, children and young people continue to receive a good quality of care and their life chances are improving over time. That quality assurance process is further assisted by monthly Regulation 33 visits. These provide mostly useful evaluative reports with clear action plans. However, the Regulation 33 visitor does not regularly consult with relatives to obtain their comments on progress and quality of care. This shortfall in the monitoring is not significant though as the Registered Manager regularly seeks feedback by questionnaires from relatives and acts upon any issues of concern.

The home environment is well maintained and presents as warm and welcoming.

This helps the children and young people feel respected and valued. The home has good relationships with the local community and neighbours which help children and young people to appreciate the impact of their behaviour.

Children and young people's files are clear, stored securely and are up to date. They give a good account of their experience in the home and are easily accessible for future reference.

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.