

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034301
Inspection date	25/07/2013
Inspector	Peter Harrell
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	13/03/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This home is one of a number of children's homes operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for five young people who may be experiencing emotional or behavioural 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**.

This children's home provides consistent, well-planned and individualised care. The outcomes for young people are good. The staff team is committed to provide a high quality service to children and young people as well as demonstrating safe care practices. Outcomes are monitored by leaders and managers. Young people make positive progress, considering the starting point of their placements.

The home works well with external agencies, to promote young people's welfare and to keep them safe. The quality of care provided for the young people is positively valued by placing social workers. The home is described by young people as, 'everything's good, staff are good, no complaints, very happy here'. Education is seen as a priority and staff promote regular school and college attendance.

There is a shortfall regarding the clarity of one part of the Statement of Purpose. Training of staff regarding current developments in safeguarding is recommended. A specific development plan is not in place and records are not all signed and dated and young people are not consulted in one matter regarding staff recruitment. The Registered Manager is aware of these matters and is highly committed to provide a high quality service.

Staff are supported by an experienced, committed and suitably qualified manager. Experienced and suitably vetted staff and assistant managers are committed to provide an excellent level of care, together with being highly motivated to improve further young people's outcomes.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- make sure the Statement of Purpose is clear and ensure that it is reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance, in particular, arrangements made to counter bullying (NMS 13.1)
- ensure there is a written development plan in place which is specific to the home, reviewed annually, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure where practicable, young people are involved in the recruitment of staff in the home (NMS 16.8)
- ensure that training keeps staff up-to-date with practice developments and reflects the policies and business needs of the home (NMS 18.1)
- make sure that entries in records are legible and signed and dated. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

This children's home values each young person as an individual. Consequently, young people are secure in their identity and benefit from increased confidence. Additionally, young people living at the home are able to develop and learn. Achievements are regularly celebrated which further enhances their self-esteem.

Young people's educational needs are well supported and positive outcomes are achieved in relation to their learning. Taking into account their starting points, attendance and participation at college and school have increased significantly. This is achieved as a result of young people being actively encouraged by staff at the home, combined with well-established routines and consistent messages of support. There is clear commitment from a staff team, who recognise the importance of education and educational achievement and progress is made by young people to attain their educational targets. In order to ensure that a positive approach to education is maintained, staff additionally ensure there is good communication with schools and colleges. Young people's keyworkers actively participate in educational reviews and work closely with various educational placements. A social worker commented: Staff attend all the young person's PEP meetings and have a good understanding of meeting a child's educational needs; my young person is doing well now.'

Young people are actively encouraged to understand the implications of risk-taking

behaviours and are given regular opportunities to consider and reflect upon their actions. The home appropriately identifies and assesses these behaviours and in order to decrease them, staff at the home assess situations and implement structures and boundaries.

Young people maintain meaningful relationships with the significant people in their life. They are supported with contact visits and telephone calls and benefit from additional emotional support of staff at these times.

Quality of care

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

Meaningful and positive relationships exist between the young people and the staff team, who place the well-being of young people at the centre of their practice. As a result of this, young people make good progress in many aspects of their lives. This supportive environment is a key strength of this service.

Young people benefit from living in a caring environment, described as, 'proactive in helping the young people to feel understood', by a social worker who provided feedback for this inspection. The staff team's composition, being mixed in experience and gender, enhances the care the young people receive.

Young people benefit from active participation in a wide range of meaningful activities and experiences. Staff work hard to make sure that the wishes, feelings and needs and wishes of young people are met while carrying out a professional and supportive role. Young people are generally appreciative of this level of support provided and are positive about their overall experience of living at the home.

Established policies and procedures are effective in dealing with concerns and complaints; these are outlined in the young person's guide and this allows young people to have a clear understanding of what to expect from the home. Young people confirmed that they know how to raise any matters of concern. Where English is not a young person's first language, this guide is translated for them upon arrival at the home; this is good practice.

The health of the young people at the home is actively promoted with support to attend regular appointments with health professionals to obtain relevant support and advice. They have access to suitable, preventative medical treatment whenever this is needed. Healthy lifestyles are encouraged. Young people also make appropriate choices in relation to exercise and food. The procedures for the secure disposal of medication are in place, together with correct administration.

The home's design and location are highly suitable for its function, with a good level of large, bright communal spaces. It is well furnished, in good decorative order, with regular maintenance in place, as well as improvements being carried out at the time of the inspection. Young people are also provided with their own bedrooms and are given opportunities to make their bedrooms as personal and private as possible.

Young people's bedroom doors are fitted with appropriate locks to promote their dignity, security and privacy.

Young people receive good support and preparation for the transition to adult life. Staff provide regular support to help them develop independence skills. Young people are developing good practical and self-care skills to prepare them for adulthood. Recently young people successfully moved on to semi-independent living.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they are safe and feel able to report any concerns to staff. The managers at the home are knowledgeable regarding safeguarding policies and procedures.

The home has an appropriate policy and procedure for the use of physical intervention. In order to ensure that young people are managed safely, should any incidents of physical intervention take place, staff and the managers find supportive strategies to deal with behavioural issues. For example, the use of regular staff meetings with a clinical psychologist and training updates on behaviour management. As a consequence of this, the use and duration of physical restraints have reduced since the last inspection.

Staff are clear about what to do if a young person should go missing and Incidents have reduced in their frequency and duration, since the last inspection. The home has clear updated protocols with the local police. This ensures that there is a prompt response if one of the young people goes missing. Young people benefit from comprehensive risk assessments and sufficient staffing ratios which minimise the risk of this occurring.

The Registered Manager and assistant managers have substantial experience in supporting staff teams and in working with children. In order to enhance skills of staff members further and to look at ways to ensure that vulnerable young people are not being exploited, the Registered Manager has identified, that the staff team would benefit from up-to-date group staff safeguarding training, in this area.

The Registered Manager has put in place procedures in the employment of new staff which follow the local authority's safer recruitment practices. There has been a full audit of all staff files with a detailed checklist put into place in all files, which are held securely in the home. Since the last inspection, there have been three new members of staff appointed to work at the home and correct checks and references on these people are completed and have been verified by telephone. The consequences of these safer recruitment practices ensure there is a more robust approach to preventing unsuitable people being recruited to work at the home and from having the opportunity to harm children and young people. Young people are not always familiar with new members of staff who are employed to work at the home and state that they would like to be involved in the process of interviewing new members.

The approach to health and safety matters is rigorous. Records within the home indicate that all appliances and the premises are regularly safety checked. Fire alarms and fire drills are regular and this demonstrates young people's knowledge of a safe evacuation in the event of an emergency. The environment is physically safe and secure, taking account of the needs of the young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people experience care from a positive staff team who want the young people they care for to do well. There are sufficient numbers of staff present to deliver care and attend to administrative tasks. This ensures the young people can regularly meet with, and feel supported by adults working in the home.

Systems are in place to monitor the home's performance. Registered provider visits happen as required and several are unannounced. There is an action plan for the home but no development plan in place. The home has a current Statement of Purpose which outlines the aims and objectives of the home. It describes the level of service young people can expect to receive and how they will be cared for. However, there is no specific section regarding how to counter bullying and the contact details for Ofsted are regional rather than the national business unit.

Young people's files are securely stored and contain documents which contribute to a clear understanding of the young person's life. However, not all documents are signed and dated correctly, which does not ensure the highest level of recording accuracy.

Children benefit from being cared for by staff members who are supported in their work through regular supervision, training opportunities and access to the Registered Manager and senior managers in the local authority who oversee the progress of the home. Staff are able to support children in understanding and reflecting on their personal development from the start of their placement. This contributes to their positive self-view.

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection, which have been addressed; incidents of challenging behaviour are reflected upon and young people's comments are recorded more frequently. One requirement and four good practice recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. The Registered Manager is aware of these areas and is committed to improve further the outcomes for children and young people.

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.