

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034686
Inspection date	23/07/2012
Inspector	Bill Drumm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	31/01/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

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 home provides care and accommodation for up to 5 young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is provided by a local authority.

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**.

There are some good examples of personalised individual care being delivered by this service that enables young people to make good progress emotionally, socially and in their education. Young people spoke highly of the staff, the home and the care they receive. One young person went so far as to say the care received was excellent. Young people have achieved and developed from their starting points, especially with regard to their emotional well-being and education. Feedback from staff and the looked after nurse, about how the home operates is very positive. Young people are very happy living at the home and know what is planned to help them meet the objectives of their placement.

The home is very comfortable and well appointed. The atmosphere created by the staff and young people is informal, friendly and very cheerful. Staff, have a genuine affection for the young people and are fully committed to ensuring they achieve their maximum potential. Young people know that staff, genuinely care about them.

The young people demonstrate a willingness to share their belongings and generally get on well with each other. Bullying does not happen at the home. Staff work hard to ensure that all young people are kept safe and free from harm.

The home is well managed although there are some shortfalls in the home's record keeping and external monitoring. The written details of when a young person has been restrained or sanctioned are not retained on the young person's file. In addition, young people who have been restrained are not given the opportunity to discuss the restraint with someone who has not been involved in the incident. Additionally, the independent visitor to the home does not speak privately and in

confidence with staff. This does not allow staff the opportunity to express any concerns they may have confidentially.

The home has taken positive steps to address a previous recommendation in relation to the monitoring of care plans by key-workers. Key-workers now monitor each young person's progress and ensure their individual needs continue to be met.

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 any child who has been restrained is given the opportunity to be debriefed by a responsible person who had not been involved in the restraint incident (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.103)
- ensure that, during every visit, the person carrying out the visits under Regulation 33 speaks in private with staff working at the home (NMS 21.7)
- ensure that a written copy of all incidents of when a young person being missing from home, and the use of any measures of control or restraint is retained on their personal file. (NMS 22)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are treated with dignity and respect. This helps to promote their feelings of self-worth and improves their self-esteem. Young people have friendly, warm and positive relationships with staff who provide them with good role models and a consistent level of care. One Young person said, 'it's excellent here, they all care about us and they've helped me a lot over the years'. Feedback from the looked after children nurse is also good. She said, 'The home is always welcoming and calm and the staff are very friendly and dedicated in helping the young people.'

Young people's health needs are met. All young people are registered with local primary health care providers and are supported to attend all routine health appointments. Staff, are trained in the administration of first aid and the safe handling and administration of medication. One young person said, 'they do look after us here and make sure we're fit and well'. Written records are kept of all health interventions to ensure the manager can monitor that young people are helped to stay fit and healthy. Where specialist needs are identified, the right services are accessed to provide support or counselling. Staff, have positive working relationships with local support agencies such as sexual health advisors and drug and alcohol workers. This helps young people to receive the right care they need.

Young people are actively encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Menus are planned and

discussed with them and fresh fruit is freely available for healthy snacks. Exercise is encouraged and staff join in activities, such as trips to theme parks, games of football and swing ball. This helps to introduce young people to fun ways of keeping fit.

Education and employment is actively encouraged and supported. All the young people currently living at the home are in some form of education or employment. One young person said, 'I want to work and I'm motivated. I just want to better myself'. There are facilities in the home for private study to ensure young people have access to a quiet area for learning and homework. This helps young people to achieve their maximum potential.

Young people are consulted about the running of the home. Regular meetings take place between young people and staff in meetings and key-worker sessions. One young person said, 'we can talk to staff at any time and they do listen to us'. Since the last inspection the manager and staff have looked at how they can involve young people more in decision making. Questionnaires have been developed and the manager is in the process of introducing these periodically throughout the year for young people to complete. Young people's views and wishes are taken into account and generally they feel they are listened to. A social worker said 'Staff are very good at communicating with young people. They are encouraged to join in meetings and staff talk to them about their views. The child care is excellent, it is a good nurturing service'.

Where appropriate all young people are encouraged and supported to remain in contact with friends and relatives. Contact arrangements are discussed in placement meetings and are clearly recorded in case files. Where necessary contact visits are facilitated by staff. In addition, young people are encouraged to develop positive friendships in the local community and are encouraged to invite friends home to visit.

Quality of care

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

The attitude of staff and their manner helps to ensure the home has a calm and relaxed atmosphere. The local looked after children nurse said, 'I enjoy coming here, it's always a pleasure to visit'. In addition, one young person said, 'this home is excellent, the staff are outstanding and it's a fantastic place to live'. Careful consideration is given to the admission of any young person to the home. Their individual needs are looked at alongside those of existing residents to ensure the placement is the most appropriate and to ensure the minimum amount of disruption.

Each young person has an individual care plan. Care plans are clear, detailed and easily understandable. Young people are encouraged to participate in the care planning process and to be fully involved in decisions affecting their lives. This helps to promote their self-confidence and self-esteem. Key-working systems are effective in helping to promote each young person's development. Members of staff understand the needs of young people and work hard to ensure these are met.

Staff work hard to promote the physical and emotional health care needs of young people. They provide a safe and secure environment where young people can flourish and develop. Incidents where young people have used self-harming behaviour or put themselves at risk have reduced significantly over time as young people have developed their own coping mechanisms. Where they are able, young people attend to their own primary health care needs. This helps to develop their independence and to prepare them for adulthood.

The home has positive links with education providers and communication between the two is free flowing. Staff actively support and encourage attendance at school or college. Young people who are old enough are encouraged to participate in training or to seek employment. The home's manager was able to give several examples of where staff have enabled young people to find a job and to attend work experience. One young person said, 'I just want to work and to better myself'. Employment helps young people to feel self-worth and to build their confidence.

The home works hard to encourage young people to become involved in community-based activities. These include visits to theme parks, attending a local gym and shopping trips. Young people also have friends in the local community and, where appropriate, are encouraged to invite them to the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and know they can talk to staff if they are worried or unhappy about anything. One young person said, 'I can complain but I don't want to. What would I want to complain about, it's great here'. Staff know what the home's safeguarding procedures are and receive regular training to help keep their knowledge and skills up to date. Detailed records are kept so that all safeguarding concerns can be closely monitored and the welfare of young people protected. The home has good, positive links with the local police and community support officers. A written policy is in place for sharing information between the home and the police service with specific regard to young people who are suspected of being victims of sexual exploitation.

Young people who go missing are protected and there is no bullying in the home. Young people know the measures staff will take to keep them safe, and understand why they have risk assessments to help them recognise and manage some of their own behaviour. This helps young people to consider how their actions impact, not only on others, but on their own safety as well.

Staff are skilled at managing difficult behaviour and know the young people very well. Restraints are only used as a last resort. Behaviour management is discussed regularly at team meetings. This allows time for staff to reflect on any incidents of physical intervention or behaviour management and to discuss alternative strategies. Staff, receive regular training to ensure they know how to safely hold young people.

The recording of restraints is good. However, young people are not always debriefed by someone who has not been involved in the incident. In addition, a copy of the restraint record is not routinely filed on each young person's case file. This means that a complete record of their stay at the home will not be retained on their individual file.

The home's manager ensures that regular checks are made of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills and the time at which fire drills take place is fully recorded. Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. Risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of gas installations and electrical equipment also take place.

Young people benefit from a very stable staff team. There have been no new appointments since the last inspection. The home's recruitment and selection process is detailed, thorough and robust. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people and protected from potential abuse. Visitors to the home are asked to clearly identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitors' book.

Leadership and management

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

This home has a committed staff team with clear leadership. Regular training, supervision and staff appraisal ensures the workforce, are competent and have the right knowledge and skills to do a good job. Staffing levels are good and meet the needs of the young people. There is no use of agency staff and the team try to cover any staffing shortfalls. Comments from staff include, 'We are very motivated to get things right for the young people', 'team morale is good' and 'we can see how we have made a positive impact on the lives of young people, which is great'.

The Statement of Purpose covers all of the required elements, and staff are clear about the aims and objectives of the home. The children's guide gives children a good overview of what it is like to live at the home, and children feel they receive the information they need when they come to stay.

The home is regularly monitored. The registered manager has actively looked at how to better consult with, parents and young people about the running of the home and to include them in the decision making process. The manager, and staff team, have a good understanding about the home's strengths and weaknesses and there are development plans in place to further develop the home.

Regulation 33 visits take place and Ofsted are provided with written reports in a timely manner. The reports are informative and give an overview of how the home is performing between inspection visits. There is some consultation with young people and their families during the visits. However, there have been no confidential discussions with staff to ascertain their views about how children are looked after.

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.