

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034797
Inspection date	24/05/2012
Inspector	Dorrit Andrews
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	08/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides long-term residential care for up to six young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by the local Children's Services Department.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

Young people make good progress at this home. They receive highly-individualised care which is personalised and focussed on their individual needs. Young people enjoy warm, positive relationships with staff who are highly committed and widely experienced. Proactive behaviour management strategies are consistently applied. In turn these are having a positive impact on reducing young people's risk taking behaviours and increasing education engagement and attendance. Young people report they generally feel safe and feel very well cared for. Comments from young people about the quality of care in the home include: 'it's great here'; 'it's the best ever placement'; and 'staff have helped me to look at things differently.'

Young people's views and wishes about their care and the running of the home are actively sought, valued and listened to. They are fully involved in discussions about their care and planning for their future and are helped to understand why it may not always be possible to fully meet their wishes.

There is good management of the home and the management team is strongly committed to the home's continuous improvement. A development plan is in place and effective systems monitor the home's performance and care of young people.

Areas identified for further improvement relate to the recording of a complaint in accordance with the home's own procedures and the awaited receipt of an updated care plan.

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
28 (2001)	ensure each case record includes a copy of any plan for the care of the child prepared by his placing authority. (Regulation 28 (1); Schedule 3 (18))	15/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's written procedure for dealing with complaints is followed with particular reference to the appropriate recording of any complaint. (NMS 21.10)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people continue to benefit greatly from the individual care and support they receive and make good progress in understanding their background and circumstances as a result. Their emotional needs are effectively supported by skilled staff who place young people's well-being at the centre of their practice. In turn, young people have developed attachments and trusting relationships with staff. Effective working partnerships with other professionals, including the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, continue to support individual young people and the work of the home.

Individual health needs are well met and young people are supported to understand the importance of regular health checks and a healthy lifestyle. Risk-taking behaviours affecting young people's physical health and well-being are being strongly targeted at present and openly discussed with the support of other professionals. As a consequence, the home is seeing a reduction in such behaviours. In addition, young people are supported to prepare at least one meal per week with guidance from the cook to promote healthy food choices. Involvement in interests and activities outside the home is also encouraged to support young people's overall well-being.

The value of education in its widest sense continues to be strongly promoted by the home. Staff demonstrate high aspirations for the young people in their care and want them to succeed and make good use of the opportunities made available to them. Education engagement and attendance has greatly improved for the vast

majority of young people in recent months often from extremely poor starting points. Individual efforts and achievement continue to be recognised and rewarded, and contribute to a young person's self-esteem and confidence.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families, friends and significant others in their lives. Arrangements are discussed and agreed in consultation with young people, their families and key professionals to ensure agreements are clear. Young people are accompanied by staff or their social worker where circumstances require. This practice provides additional emotional support for young people in preparing for and after contact visits. A number of relationships between young people and their families have improved during their placement at the home resulting in adjustments being made to the frequency and place of contact. Such practices support the repairing of family relationships and individual placements to best effect.

Young people are provided with opportunities to develop and acquire practical life skills appropriate to their age to support their self-care and develop their independence. Not all young people have readily responded to these opportunities or the expectations placed upon them in relation to this aspect of their care and development. As a consequence, the home has established and communicated much clearer expectations to young people. This is resulting in young people taking a more active responsibility for taking care of their rooms, managing their laundry and participating in cooking meals. In addition, the use of public transport is strongly promoted together with the arranging of personal appointments where appropriate. Such practices are empowering young people to achieve greater independence and self-reliance.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive excellent individualised care tailored to their needs. Clear, consistent boundaries and positive behaviour strategies enable young people to reflect, develop and progress. Staff work extremely hard to build open, warm and positive relationships with young people and, as a result, young people feel cared for and are able to talk with staff.

Young people are fully involved in discussions about their care and planning for their future. Their views are regularly sought and staff help them understand why it may not always be possible to fully meet their wishes. When difficult messages have to be conveyed to young people, staff demonstrate patience and perseverance and provide time and support for young people to reflect on their circumstances and move forward. In turn, young people are developing increased self-control and are able to voice their views and feelings more confidently and effectively.

Young people report they feel listened to. Where possible, things change as a result of listening to their views and they receive an explanation when their ideas and suggestions are not taken up. Staff ensure young people are fully aware of the ways

they can raise any issues or concerns about their care and young people feel confident in approaching staff with any issues. In addition, young people have ready access to the home's Regulation 33 visitor, complaints procedure and independent advocacy services.

Staff have established exceptionally effective partnerships with a range of key professionals to support individual young people and the work of the home. Referrals are made to specialist services where a particular need is identified and young people benefit greatly from strong links with local health professionals and services. This includes health professionals visiting young people at the home. Very good records are maintained of health checks and treatment, including times when young people have refused to attend. Effective and robust systems support the efficient administration of medication to ensure consistent practice is maintained in line with the home's procedures.

Personal identity needs are positively identified and addressed. Diversity matters are openly and readily discussed by a well-informed staff team. Time is taken to gain insight into individual's preferred routine, family, likes and dislikes from the outset. In addition, care is taken to compile a statement of equality and diversity needs to ensure these are identified and addressed in both daily living and care planning.

The home is highly committed to promoting young people's education engagement and attendance and strongly challenges any potential barriers. A member of staff has been designated the role of education co-ordinator to monitor attendance, liaise with education providers, attend associated meetings and bring any matters of concern to the county education co-ordinator. As a result, the home reports noticeable improvements in communication and the understanding of roles which in turn is contributing to improved outcomes for young people.

The home's location promotes good access to a range of local amenities, activities and transport links. Accommodation is clean, tidy and well maintained. The recent re-decoration of some areas ensures a welcoming environment is maintained.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report they are very well cared for and generally feel safe. Staff recognise the particular vulnerabilities of the young people placed in their care. They continuously maintain an open dialogue with young people about keeping safe both within and outside the home to enable them to understand the potential impact of any risk-taking behaviour.

Staff fully understand their role and responsibilities in relation to safeguarding matters and have established highly effective working partnerships with other agencies and organisations to support individual work with young people. Social workers praise the work of the home in managing risk taking behaviour and believe the home to be 'good' at keeping young people safe. Social workers report they are

kept informed and receive regular updates from the home. Professionals' meetings have also been called by the home's management team in response to specific concerns regarding the welfare and safeguarding of individuals.

Individual risk assessments are regularly updated in light of changing needs and circumstances. These, together with consistently-applied behaviour management strategies, contribute to the positive management of known risk taking behaviour. Young people who go missing from the home are protected as far as possible through robust procedures and locally-agreed protocols with police. Relevant parties are kept informed when young people go missing. Staff respond positively to young people on their return and police always conduct a welfare check visit to speak with the young person concerned. Good records are maintained of when incidents have occurred and are regularly monitored. Incidents of young people going missing have recently significantly reduced.

Interactions between staff and young people are observed to be warm, positive and supportive. All staff have recently received restorative approaches training and are regularly trained in the positive management of behaviour, including de-escalation, and physical intervention. Restorative approaches are used to enable young people to develop self-control and socially-acceptable behaviour. Sanctions used are proportionate, records are regularly monitored and include young people's views. Bullying is not tolerated and is not reported as an issue at the home. There has been no use of physical intervention since the last inspection.

Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises, grounds and activities and an established system of review ensures these are kept up to date. Regular cycles of maintenance by external contractors are also undertaken together with regular servicing of fire safety equipment. These practices support the maintenance of a safe environment for young people, staff and visitors.

There have been no new staff recruited since the last inspection. Visitors are monitored and appropriate records maintained to support the safety of young people living at the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed by a permanent Registered Manager and operates to the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. Staff, young people and placing social workers are clear about the home's aims and the services and facilities it provides. The management team is strongly committed to the home's continuous improvement. The requirement raised at the previous inspection regarding the submission of Regulation 34 reports has been appropriately addressed.

One complaint has been received by the home since the last inspection and appropriate action taken. Whilst the complaint has been recorded, it has not been

logged in the home's central record, in accordance with the home's written procedure. Significant events are notified to the relevant authorities to promote the safeguarding of young people.

The home is adequately resourced and maintained to a good standard. A development plan is in place for the service and is annually reviewed. Clear, effective systems operated by the manager and provider monitor the home's performance and care of young people. Reports are compiled and matters raised are acted upon to improve the quality of care provided and outcomes for young people. Where necessary, the manager advocates very strongly on behalf of young people to secure the services they need to support them to progress and develop.

Young people are cared for by skilled and competent staff who are sufficient in number, experience and training to meet their needs. Effective management of staffing to ensure continuity and consistency of care has supported the home through a difficult time in relation to staff absences and challenging periods of risk-taking behaviour by young people. Staff receive regular supervision and there is a strong commitment to the provision of high-quality training and staff development. Arrangements are made to ensure the knowledge gained from specialist training is cascaded across the team to keep individuals suitably informed.

Records are clear and securely stored. However, technical difficulties are reported to have delayed the sending of an updated care plan for one young person by the placing authority. This matter has been chased by the home and a copy is anticipated to be received soon.

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.