

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034922
Inspection date	09/11/2012
Inspector	Mark Kersh
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	15/12/2011
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to four young people of either gender who have experienced 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**.

The home provides a supportive environment in which young people say they are happy. Young people say they have good relationships with staff. Written plans are detailed and promote positive outcomes for young people. Staff are suitably qualified and are able to observe and recognise the individual needs of young people.

Young people are fully involved in the decisions that affect them on a day-to-day basis, helping them to develop understanding and responsibility for their actions. There are good systems in place for consultation, although responses are not analysed for any impact. Staff, in partnership with social workers and other involved professionals, deliver meaningful support that promotes independence and encourages the self-regulation of behaviour by young people.

Young people report they feel safe in this home and confirm that unsafe situations and behaviours are well- managed by staff.

The management team have used inspection outcomes and internal monitoring to identify strengths and weaknesses in the home. The management arrangements are robust and the team are working together to secure improvements in the home. This has led to improved outcomes for young people.

Shortfalls identified include the need for: a telephone for young people; an analysis of responses from consultations and a quick response to investigations into allegations.

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
15 (2001)	ensure young people have a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private. (Regulation 15 (4) (a))	07/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the views, wishes and feelings of children and those significant to them are taken into account in monitoring staff and in developing the home (NMS 1.7)
- ensure investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm are handled fairly, and consistently in a way that provides effective protection for the child, and at the same time supports the person who is the subject of the allegation. This specifically relates to clarifying the roles of senior managers involved in disciplinary procedures to avoid undue delays. (NMS 20.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people receive guidance helping them to develop insight and understanding about the issues that matter to them. This enables them to realistically address problems and make meaningful progress. By acting upon good advice from staff and the provision of practical opportunities to take greater control of their lives, young people practice self-improvement skills which help them to build self-esteem and emotional resilience. Through systematic achievement, supported by adult praise, their self-worth and perception of what goals are important have realistically improved.

Young people demonstrate through their choice of food and activities that they know about the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Young people enjoy a range of food which meets their individual cultural needs. They understand about the health risks posed by smoking and the misuse of illegal substances, including how this inhibits their ability to make considered, safe decisions. Health plans are detailed and medication administration systems are effective. In addition, young people have access to specialist health services that enable them to develop a better

understanding of the social issues which may affect them.

The majority of young people attend school or college more than they were before. They are motivated and value education. Young people, awaiting school placements, engage in daily educational activities until staff can secure the right provision to meet their educational needs. Young people, who have been in placement for longer, demonstrate their desire to achieve.

Young people are encouraged to make choices and have contributed to the home. They are routinely involved in producing menus, choosing activities, personalising bedrooms and choosing toiletries. Support to sustain and develop community activities encourages young people to remain physically and emotionally well.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with families and significant people. Staff collaborate with professionals and families to promote positive contact in line with arrangements agreed in individual care plans. Staff advocate for young people to have increased contact when appropriate. Young people say they appreciate the efforts made by staff in regards to this aspect of their care. Subsequently, young people are not isolated from their families. The telephone for young people's use is broken, which restricts them from making private telephone calls.

Young people effectively learn independence skills. They develop confidence, practical experience and knowledge. Staff deliver meaningful activities that help young people by providing the necessary knowledge and opportunity to safely rehearse practical skills, such as, budgeting, cooking, personal hygiene and cleaning. This will help them cope with some of the predictable challenges of future independence. Young people experience time away from the home in an independence flat and staff consistently monitor their progress. This preparation ensures young people have the skills to live independently by the time this is needed.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the encouraging relationships they have with staff and the care provided is having a positive impact on their progress and development. Other professionals confirm this and comments include 'Staff are very caring and make sure all young people's needs are met', and 'Staff are thoughtful, reflective, insightful and caring. The young people are extremely lucky to have all of this.' Young people report that they get on well with staff who 'Are always there when you need them.'

Staff provide young people, their parents and other professionals with opportunities to feedback on developments made by the home. There have been some positive responses received as a result of this. However, not all of the feedback received is analysed and followed up. This prevents the home from moving forward and identifying any likely impact such comments have on young people, staff and the home.

Young people know how to make a complaint. As well as being able to speak to staff, telephone numbers for agencies which support young people are readily available. These are included on notice- boards and in the guide produced for young people.

Care plans, placement plans, risk assessments and behaviour management plans are comprehensive, detailed and up to date. The management team are responsive to ensure the detail in such plans is monitored on a regular basis. This ensures young people receive consistent care and the staff team has clarity to provide effective support to them. Staff are able to give a very detailed description of the histories, personalities and needs of the young people. They know them well and deliver highly personalised care as a result.

Young people are encouraged to try new activities. They routinely take part in a broad variety of leisure pursuits, both with the staff team and with their own friends. These opportunities provide young people with social skills, self-esteem and a way to explore talents.

The promotion of equality and diversity is a key feature of the operation of the home. The staff team demonstrate sensitivity and a firm commitment to assessing and understanding the individual needs of all young people. Young people are encouraged to understand their own individuality and to respect and celebrate the diversity of others.

The home is suitably located in close proximity to community amenities. It benefits from an extensive garden area. The internal environment is well-maintained. Young people say that the home is comfortable and 'chilled' and they have been asked to decide on new colour schemes for various rooms, including their bedrooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe within the home. This starts with a physically safe environment which is well-maintained and appropriately secure. Maintenance systems are swift and effective. Young people are encouraged to keep their own environment safe and they regularly practise fire safety drills.

Staff are well-trained in all aspects of safeguarding, through their induction and regular refresher training. Safeguarding guidance reflects working protocols with the local authority and police. Staff members know what to report and to whom. Referrals are made and consultations take place swiftly where necessary. Where appropriate, concerns and complaints reported by young people lead to the instigation of child protection procedures. The outcomes of this are usually positive, but confusion regarding responsibility roles in one case caused undue delays in the process.

The home implements behaviour management policies through planning and review. Staff understand the needs of young people and their particular vulnerabilities; they encourage young people to avoid risk-taking behaviour and to make safe choices. The quality of relationships between staff and young people plus the enforcement of boundaries and clear expectations are key features in developing positive behaviour. Physical restraint is only used as a last resort, although has not been used for some considerable time, as evidenced through record keeping. All the staff are trained in the safe use of restraint so that only safe techniques and the minimum of force is used.

There have been few incidents of a young people going missing from care since the last inspection. When this occurs, staff follow clearly-defined procedures and are proactive in managing these incidents. The home uses individual risk assessments for young people, including the risk of them going missing. Young people receive effective staff support on their return. Young people develop safer behaviour as a result of the support from the home.

Recruitment practice is central to the way the home minimises the risk of abuse taking place. Staff are carefully vetted. Application processes clearly deter unsuitable adults from applying for positions of trust at the home. The risk of harm to young people is also reduced by careful monitoring of visitors and contractors working at the home.

Leadership and management

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

A Registered Manager is in place; who is dedicated to the service in meeting the diverse needs of young people and has the confidence and support of a deputy and the staff team. Young people benefit from a home that is effectively and efficiently managed and appropriately supported within the larger organisation. The manager and staff understand the strengths and weaknesses of the service and a development plan is in place. This focuses on maintaining the quality of care provided and has been reviewed on a regular basis to ensure progress.

There have been no concerns or complaints made since the last inspection. Previous recommendations and requirements have been addressed. The home was asked to ensure all notifiable events are forwarded to Ofsted within prescribed timescales, to include monitoring checks in relation to restraint and missing from care incidents within regulation 33 reports and update the fire risk assessment.

The Statement of Purpose is well-presented and details the aims and objectives of the home. It gives clear guidance on the facilities and services provided and the structure of the staff team. Young people, their families and placing social workers understand the purpose of the home. Young people are provided with a copy of the children's guide to the home on admission.

New staff receive a comprehensive induction. They describe their colleagues as

'Supportive' and 'Helpful'. Induction records are up-to-date. Staff value the home's training opportunities. Almost all possess a relevant National Vocational Qualification; those not yet qualified are working towards it. Additional mandatory training is closely monitored to ensure attendance. Staff deliver good quality direct care as a result of their on-going learning and development. This is further underpinned by regular supervision which continues to monitor their performance targets and development needs. Staff are sufficient in numbers to meet the needs of young people.

Staff are proactive in chasing up overdue reviews, care plans and meeting minutes from the placing authority. Records for young people are clearly written and provide a detailed picture for them when they choose to access them. All written information is stored securely for confidentiality reasons.

Young people benefit from effective management and monitoring of the home. The manager undertakes routine monitoring activities, in addition to the monitoring visits by an independent person. These systems ensure that young people receive a good quality of care. All staff are aware of their roles and demonstrate their knowledge in relation to notifiable events. This ensures all appropriate authorities are notified of significant events and this further protects 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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.