

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034922
Inspection date	27/07/2011
Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	11/02/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

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.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people benefit from a well-managed service that provides them with good outcomes in relation to their starting points, although the manager has yet to obtain a management qualification. The home has experienced some turbulence in the recent past and the staff team has reviewed their practices. Good leadership with a clearer focus and an emphasis on consultation means that the team now share the same values. They are also committed to raising standards and improving the lives of young people in their care.

Young people's needs are well met by experienced and caring staff. They have a good understanding of their needs and proactively address them. Young people feel safe living at the home and feel listened to. The relationships between young people and staff are good and positive relationships have been nurtured. The atmosphere at the home is relaxed and young people are actively consulted. Respect for each other is actively promoted and young people say that they are treated fairly. Young people like the improvements made to the home and have been actively involved. Staff have developed positive relationships with parents, placing social workers and other professional agencies. The manager and team are realistic about further developments to the home and the capacity to improve, although the review of the external monitoring arrangements has yet to be implemented. Also responses to the actions in risk assessments and the removal of avoidable fire risks in the home are yet to be addressed.

Equality and diversity practices are actively promoted and integral to care practices in the home.

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
------	-------------	----------

8 (2001)	ensure the manager has a recognised qualification (Regulation 8(2)(b)(i))	30/03/2012
33 (2001)	ensure where the registered provider is an organisation or a partnership, the home shall be visited in accordance with this regulation by an employee of the organisation or partnership who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the home. (Regulation 33 (2))	31/08/2011

Recommendations

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

- remove avoidable hazards in the areas close to fire exits and young people's bedrooms (NMS 10.3)
- take action to respond to any potential sources of harm, in particular as identified in the fire risk assessment. (NMS 10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are cared for by staff who promote their welfare and support their good progress and development in relation to their needs, wishes and feelings. This helps them to develop a positive identity and understand their histories in a way that motivates them to plan for the future. Young people are actively encouraged to live a healthy lifestyle. This includes them taking regular exercise and eating a balanced diet. All of the young people have care and independence plans, so issues pertinent to their individual needs are addressed. For example, young people access smoke cessation, sexual health, drug and alcohol services from professionals who are known to them. Young people are making informed choices about their health and well-being. Young people are registered with health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and mental health services. Young people benefit from knowing about their health needs and have a say, for example, when they want to have their last immunisation. Young people are supported to attend appointments and ensure their good health is maintained.

Young people have completed their formal education and are looking to extend their educational attainment by applying to attend college or training schemes.

Staff have developed positive re-engagement and better relationships with young people as a result of group activities and improved consultation. Young people's activities integrate them into community life. They have developed friendships and social circles outside of the home. This provides them with a broad range of experiences. Young people lead active lives. For example, they are involved and have

a say in sporting activities, cinema, trips and meals out, electronic games and DVDs. Young people have regular telephone contact and visits with family and significant people, and staff actively promote and facilitate this. Staff have positive relationships with families and professionals involved with the young people.

Young people benefit from good arrangements that help them develop their independence skills. All young people have independence plans, aspects of pathway plans and are enjoying the additional responsibilities. Young people are learning how to budget and shop in places where they can save money. Staff support them to prepare and cook their own meals, keep their room tidy and maintain good personal hygiene. Confirmed plans are in place for a mentor to visit the young people to talk to them about their own experiences of independence. This is good because it demonstrates the home's commitment to ensure that young people are well informed and prepared.

Quality of care

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

Staff understand young people's care needs very well and know how to meet them. Young people's individual care plans are reviewed, updated and monitored. Young people know their plans and contribute towards them. One stakeholder commented positively about the good level of support that the home provides and said staff engage positively with young people on a range of issues, despite the resistance shown at times.

The manager and staff have successfully reviewed a number of negative care practices including locking internal doors, time spent by staff in the office away from the young people and the excessive use of, and some unfair, sanctions. This has resulted in good outcomes for young people and a positive and relaxed home environment. Staff engagement with young people is very good; there is improved consultation with young people, who are shown respect and know how to give respect. All of the young people without exception express satisfaction about the way staff treat them. They recognise that their behaviour has not always been acceptable and they had to develop mature responses. Staff are not complacent about the potential for young people to present on occasions with challenging behaviours and counter this by using appropriate de-escalation strategies.

Young people say they feel listened to and have a range of ways to express their opinions and influence how the home is run. Young people have their own meetings and most engage in key work sessions. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their statutory reviews. They have regular key work time and their views are promptly responded to. Staff actively seek the views of young people and they are consulted on a range of issues. Examples include young people choosing their own sanctions and their involvement in the refurbishment of the home and activities. This makes young people feel responsible and gives credence to their opinions, avoiding tokenism. However, staff are realistic and do help young people understand why it may not be possible to act on their wishes in all cases. Young people say that they

know how to complain, but have not has cause to. A professional from an advocacy service regularly visits the young people and their contact details are available. The home has received a number of compliments about the services that young people receive.

Staff and young people have worked diligently to improve the physical standards of the home. This area was previously not maintained to a good standard. The communal areas have significantly improved and are decorated and furnished to a good standard, providing a pleasant, homely environment that values young people. Young people say they like the appearance of the home and have ideas about how they want their own rooms to be decorated and refurbished. These plans are subject to ongoing refurbishment plans. Good relationships have been forged with the neighbours and the manager attends regular neighbourhood meetings.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and confirm that they feel safe. Staff clearly understand their role and responsibilities to protect young people and promote their safety and welfare. All staff have received refresher safeguarding training in line with 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' guidance. Staff comment positively about the impact of this training on their practice. Young people know they can approach staff with any concerns and have identified other people. Staff are aware about young people's individual risk assessments and follow them to ensure safe care practices. There have been no safeguarding issues reported.

The home has good links with the local police service. The protocol for responding to young people who go missing from home has been agreed with the police and is due to be reviewed. Staff are good at contacting young people on their mobile telephones if they do not return home at the agreed times. In most cases, young people are reported missing because they have not responded to any form of contact and staff do not know if they are safe. Young people are responded to appropriately on their return and are visited by the police to ensure that they are safe and well.

Staff are aware about young people's potential to bully each other and incidents are few. These are resolved with the young people and in one example all young people's social workers were involved. Young people say that they are not bullied and know that bullying is not acceptable. One young person said that they do not agree with anyone living at the home being victimised and want other young people to feel safe.

Young people's behaviour is managed in accordance with their behaviour management plans. Staff are appropriately trained and are confident that their practices promote good relationships with young people. Staff focus on de-escalating negative behaviours and making positive use of the relationships developed with the young people. Positive incentives are in place and young people are appropriately praised and supported. Staff take the time to talk to young people about taking

responsibility for their behaviour. The number of sanctions imposed since the last inspection has significantly reduced to two. Young people say that sanctions are fair and have no complaints. No young people have been restrained.

Positive steps are taken to promote a physically safe environment for young people, staff and visitors to the home. Regular checks on fire-fighting equipment and evacuations are regularly undertaken and young people are involved. Checks on gas and electrical equipment are carried out and certified as safe. Young people engaged in a visit and presentation by the fire and rescue service to raise their awareness about the risk of fire. This is good practice. The home's fire risk assessment has been reviewed but the actions have not been addressed. An area close to the fire exit attracts young people's belongings and a bed is damaged. These issues present potential fire risks.

No new staff have been appointed for some time because this a well-retained staff team. The recruitment and selection process therefore was not checked on this occasion.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from a good manager who provides effective leadership and direction to the staff team. Their influence has developed over time and there is a more positive and coherent response to childcare practices in the home. This has improved outcomes for young people in all aspects of their care and there is a realistic recognition about further developments. The manager is experienced and is seeking the relevant qualification to assist their role. The manager is suitably deputised by a competent social work qualified person who works closely with the manager on improvements and the day-to-day management of the home.

Staff say that they have a lot of respect for the manager and feel well supported. Staff morale is good and they are well retained. Sickness levels are low. Staff have regular supervision and can approach the manager outside of these meetings. Staff have personal development plans and up-to-date training, including safeguarding, medication, first aid and attachment. All staff have transferable skills and are either qualified to care for children and young people, are to be enrolled or are working towards this qualification.

Staff work within the home's Statement of Purpose and know what it entails. They work effectively as a team and make good use of handovers and team meetings. They demonstrate a clear understanding of the young people and make team decisions. Staff are also good at keeping parents and social workers up to date with the young people and work effectively with other agencies to ensure young people's needs continue to be well met.

The provider and manager monitor the operation of the home. Internal monitoring is delegated to the deputy with an effective overview from the manager. Visits on

behalf of the provider are still carried out by other children's home managers who report on the home's conduct and performance. Childcare professionals not directly concerned with the conduct of the home have been identified who can undertake this role, but this will not be implemented until August 2011. This was one of two requirements made at the last inspection. The second requirement and the recommendations have been met. The internal décor has improved and there are plans to refurbish the young people's bedrooms. Improvements in relation to complaints and sanctions have been reviewed to ensure they are effective and improve outcomes for young people. The fire risk assessment is up to date and is available to the staff team.

Records are well maintained and are securely stored. This ensures confidentiality of young people's information. Records are up to date and provide a good reflection of young people's development and progress. Young people can access their information. Files are regularly audited to ensure the all of the relevant information is in place and files are maintained to a quality standard.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.