

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034953
Inspection date	30/05/2013
Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/11/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 children's home is operated by the local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and 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 **adequate**.

The home is judged to be overall adequate with some good features. Individual planning for young people results in some improved outcomes for the majority of young people, with good outcomes in some cases. Parents feel that their children are safe and young people feel that their lives have improved during their time at the home.

Young people report positive relationships with staff and they say they feel safe at the home. The manager and staff work hard to engage with parents. The manager undertakes regular monitoring of the home's activities and has a development plan in place for the home.

Requirements and recommendations have been set to address shortfalls identified in relation to pathway plans, placement plans and consultation.

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
11 (2001)	promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. Specifically provide pathway plans for eligible young people as required by The Care Leavers (England) Regulations 2010 (Regulation 11)(1)(a))	28/06/2013
34 (2001)	ensure that the system referred to in paragraph (1) shall provide for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34)(3))	30/09/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all children communicate their views on all aspects of their care and support (NMS 1.3)
- ensure that each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a key worker within the home who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child. (NMS 25.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people benefit from building relationships with the staff team who work hard in helping to develop a positive sense of self. For example, young people take pride in their appearance and staff use praise and encouragement to boost self-esteem.

Young people are well aware of their family histories and the reasons for coming into care. The manager and staff make it their business to make contact with and visit families regularly. An independent reviewing officer noted that the staff had been successful promoting contact between a young person and their parent which, 'has had the impact of improving her emotional well-being significantly.'

Young people generally enjoy good health and need no routine medication. Medical attention is sought when required but young people are of an age where they make their own decisions about healthy options. They have access to a number of support agencies should they choose to use them, such as smoking cessation and substance misuse.

Young people achieve satisfactory educational outcomes given their starting points, although some enjoy good outcomes. One young person noted that staff, 'have helped me when I needed help with school and placement work.'

Attendance at school has been inconsistent in some instances meaning that young people do not always fulfil their educational potential. The majority

have sat examinations however and have plans for future training. Young people who are beyond compulsory school age are offered opportunities to develop their skills but despite staff encouragement they do not always take advantage of this.

Young people enjoy accessing local community facilities. For example, they attend the local gym to promote their fitness. They also enjoy planning holidays with staff and activities such as going to the cinema.

Young people participate in age-appropriate tasks to help prepare them for adulthood. For example, they keep their personal space in order, undertake their own laundry, assist with the shopping and meal preparation and learn how to budget. The majority of young people who are eligible lack formal pathway plans however. This hinders their ability to make a successful transition to independent living.

Quality of care

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

Young people live in a generally harmonious environment. As young adults they each have their own interests and friends, but occasionally socialise together. Staff show genuine regard and warmth to young people. They support young people in their health, education and relationships with others. One young person noted that they, 'get on with most staff that look after me.' Parents feel that their children are suitably supported. One parent noted that staff, 'couldn't do anything better' for their child.

Staff work together to implement consistent boundaries, and treat young people as the emerging young adults they are. There is no need therefore for restraint and behaviour management focuses on consequences rather than sanctions. This enables young people to understand that their actions and decisions may have both positive and negative effects. Despite strong support from staff, some young people continue to engage in behaviours outside of the home that is injurious to their long-term health and well-being.

Young people have a lot to say for themselves about how they are cared for. For example, they have contributed to organisational change and on aspects of how the home is run. Although their views are represented at statutory reviews, these do not always find their way into key documentation such as placement plans and other documentation.

Placement plans are detailed and cover all aspects of young people's development and diverse needs. They lack clear measurable objectives however and focus on generalised rather than specific outcomes. This means some of young people's needs, or ways of meeting their needs, may be overlooked. Work is underway however to introduce new formats which will better facilitate this process.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding is a strength of the home. Young people feel safe and they do not identify bullying as an issue. An independent reviewing officer noted that staff have, 'managed to divert the child from the fringes of child sexual abuse on arrival, to a safe lifestyle now.'

Young people are protected by staff that have a good understanding of their individual safeguarding issues. The incidence of young people going missing has reduced to the point that it is minimal, although young people frequently return to family which are classed as unauthorised absences.

The staff and manager visit families to discuss how best to manage their return to the home, and escalate matters with the police where young people are felt to be at risk. Missing procedures are in place, and are currently under review with the local police.

Young people are safeguarded by detailed individual assessments with strategies in place to minimise any risk to their well-being. Health and safety checks take place at required intervals. This ensures the safety of all within the home.

Robust recruitment procedures ensure that only those who are safe to work with vulnerable groups are employed at the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home now has a permanent Registered Manager in post. This provides the home with consistent and stable leadership. Staff welcome the new systems being implemented and say that they feel well supported by management. A casual member of staff noted that they are treated as part of the team with the same expectations, support and opportunities. One social worker noted that 'since the appointment of the new manager things have vastly improved.'

Young people are cared for by an experienced, qualified staff team who are well supervised and have good training opportunities. They are sufficient in number to meet the needs of the young people living within the home. Staff often go the 'extra mile', for example providing outreach support to individuals who have recently left the home and supporting families of current residents.

The manager and staff also make strenuous efforts to secure paperwork, such as pathway plans, that young people are entitled to have in place. A social worker commented that staff, 'are certainly keen to ensure that all correct statutory documentation is in place for young people.'

Attention to matters relating to equality and diversity is a strength of the home.

These aspects of young people's identity are integrated throughout the planning and review process. The religious obligations of staff and young people are observed, for example staff can take time to pray when they are required to.

Communication with social workers, families and other stakeholders is a strength of the home. One social worker noted that: 'a young person was recently allocated a different key worker. This person took the time to inform me of the change, introduce themselves and now gives me a weekly update. This person is very proactive.'

Staff indicate that managers listen to what they have to say about how to improve the service. There is frequent consultation with young people but their views, and those of social workers and parents are not evidence in the manager's regulation 34 report. This does not demonstrate a fully effective system to drive forward improvement within the home.

The Registered Manager has taken appropriate action to address the shortfalls identified at the last inspection relating to regulation 33 reports, sanctions and training. This indicates capacity for change and has therefore impacted positively on 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.