

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035220
Inspection date	06/08/2013
Inspector	Bill Drumm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	13/12/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 local authority children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three children of either sex, aged 12 years to 17 years. It is registered to care for young people whose main needs arise from emotional or 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**.

Overall, the home provides adequate levels of care and support to young people who are vulnerable and have very complex needs. Staff and young people have developed good trusting relationships with each other, which helps to keep them safe from abuse or exploitation. In addition, young people have made some progress since their admission. The atmosphere within the home is warm, relaxed and supportive. Young people are friendly and polite.

Young people are supported to attend school or college. Staff encourage them to attend regularly and to work hard. Staff want them to do the best they can for themselves. Young people enjoy a variety of leisure activities including playing out with friends in the local community, swimming and trips to amusement parks. This helps to keep them occupied, provides them with opportunities to try new things and develops their confidence.

Areas identified for improvement relate to: the provision of appropriate education, the involvement of young people in the running of the home, the care planning systems for young people, social work visits to young people and the development plan for the home. These have not directly impacted on the safety and welfare of young people. However, they have impacted on the progress each young person is able to make while living at the home.

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
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in a children's home, in particular ensuring that the children make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18 (1)(a))	31/10/2013
15 (2001)	ensure that any disabled child accommodated in the home is provided with access to such aids and equipment which he may require as a result of his disability in order to facilitate communication with others. (Regulation 15 (5))	31/10/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each young person'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)
- ensure that each young person is visited by their social worker at the frequency expected by regulations (NMS 25.6)
- write a development plan for the future of the home. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people feel safe, learn new things and experience new activities within their placements. Examples of such activities include playing out with friends in the local community, trips to theme parks and swimming. One young person's social worker said, 'My young person's enjoying himself here. He's settled in really well.'

Involvement in community-based activities helps young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Participating in new activities and learning new things helps them to grow in confidence and improve their self-esteem.

Staff and young people have regular meetings to talk about how the home is run. Written records are maintained which show that staff and young people regularly discuss issues around safety, healthy living and activities they would like to try. The

development of the garden area by installing a sandpit and trampoline was at the suggestion of young people. However, young people living at the home have varying degrees of understanding and literacy. Staff explain the outcome of these meetings to the young people and try to help them understand their content. However, the written records of the meetings are not written in a manner that is easily understood by the group. This means that young people cannot always remember what developments have been made in the home, following their suggestions.

Young people are all registered with local primary health care providers, and any young people who are ill or suffer accidents are quickly attended to. Young people who have specialist health care needs are supported and encouraged to access secondary health care providers such as occupational therapy, child mental health facilities and psychology services. Young people enjoy a well-balanced and varied diet. This means that the health of the young people is fully promoted and they are learning appropriate coping mechanisms to deal with their individual anxieties or issues.

Young people attend school or college, and their success, no matter how small, is celebrated. However, not all young people receive a suitable educational programme. One young person's social worker said, 'It is recognised that their self-esteem is affected in their current school as they cannot contribute the same as most other young people.' The local authority has put a range of measures in place to support individual young people with their education provision. However, it is unclear whether these measures are helping to meet the needs of certain young people.

All young people develop a positive self-image and are aware of their own personal needs. They are able to learn new things and to develop their independence. Within the home, young people take part in activities for daily living. Young people engage well in independence programmes, no matter what their age. This will help to equip them with the practical skills necessary to take care of themselves as they get older. Young people who are old enough have pathway plans in place. These pathway plans and independence programmes are used well and mean that young people receive the help and support they need to make a successful transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Staff provide a warm and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. The needs of each young person have been assessed prior to being placed at the home and individual placement plans have been written. One young person's social worker said, 'This is a good placement for my young person. They have settled well and I'm pleased with the progress they've made.' However, the objectives recorded within the home's placement plans do not always reflect the plans agreed at the most recent statutory review. This means that staff or young people themselves, may be unclear about what their placement at the home is meant to achieve.

Each young person has a key worker and meetings between key workers and young people take place at regular intervals. The content of discussions between key workers and young people is fully recorded. However, because of their level of understanding, some young people may not be able to fully understand the written records. Additionally, key workers do not routinely review each young person's care plan with them. This is particularly the case where young people are placed at the home on an interim basis, until other placement opportunities have been identified such as foster placements. The progress young people make, or amendments to care plans in light of changing needs are not clearly recorded. Young people are not kept up to date with progress on their future living arrangements.

The home has a thorough admissions process for young people, which includes those young people who are placed at short notice. Members of staff are committed to ensuring each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop both physically and emotionally. Where at all possible, young people are encouraged to visit the home prior to admission in order to meet staff members, any other young people living there, to ask any questions they may have and to familiarise themselves with their surroundings. This process helps to overcome any anxieties the young person may have and to ensure staff can meet their needs.

The home is located near to a public park and green areas where young people can play with friends. There are good communication links to larger towns and cities nearby. Each young person has their own bedroom. They are encouraged to keep their rooms clean and tidy and to personalise them. Young people have access to a computer and computer gaming equipment. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise and enjoy a meal together. In all, the home provides a comfortable and pleasant environment for young people to enjoy.

Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle. Individual dietary needs are catered for and members of staff have undergone training in safe food hygiene. Each young person has written consent forms in place in order for members of staff to administer medication or first aid where this is necessary. Members of staff have also had training in the safe handling and administration of medication. The welfare of young people is safeguarded. Relationships between members of staff and young people are very warm and friendly. Members of staff actively strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. No complaints have been made by young people; they make good progress and appear happy living at the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home's manager has systems in place within the home to safeguard young people and there have been no occasions since the last inspection when a young

person has been missing. Additionally, risk assessments relating to the possible behaviour exhibited by young people have also been undertaken. Risk assessments are clear and reviewed regularly. Young people are kept safe and are well looked after. In addition, there are no recorded incidents of bullying having occurred within the home. The manager and all members of staff are fully trained in safeguarding and receive refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to ensure they are both confident and competent in dealing with any safeguarding issues should they arise.

Members of staff promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home and young people are supported, within the limits of their understanding, to take responsibility for their actions. Restorative techniques are promoted in favour of sanctions. The restraint or holding of young people rarely takes place. There have been two occasions since the last inspection when a young person has been held or restrained. Written records relating to the use of restraint are retained and they provide full details of each episode of physical intervention.

Young people live in a safe environment because the home has a thorough and systematic approach to risk management. The home's manager carries out regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting. Young people take part in fire drills and the times at which fire drills take place are fully recorded. Health and safety risk assessments are clear, focused and regularly reviewed. Regular checks of electrical equipment also take place.

There have been no new appointments to the staff team since the last full inspection. The home has clear, robust recruitment policies and procedures in place. Staff personnel files contain sufficient information to fully explain any gaps in employment. In addition, character references have been checked to ensure their authenticity. This helps to ensure young people are looked after by suitable people and that they are protected from potential abuse.

Leadership and management

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

The home's manager is an experienced professional who provides effective and competent leadership. Staff members are enthusiastic, motivated and encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. However, placing social workers do not always visit the young people at regular intervals. This means that not all young people receive the support they need from their social workers, particularly at times of change. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. Placing social workers know what skills the staff team have and how they can be utilised to help young people achieve their maximum potential.

The home's manager provides daily support to the staff team and regular formal supervision. This helps staff members to know what is expected of them and to feel supported in their work. One member of staff spoken to said, 'I think we have good support.' Young people receive consistent care from a well-supported staff team.

Members of staff understand each young person's individual strengths and needs. Working practices are consistent in enabling young people to develop both physically and emotionally.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training all staff and in ensuring their training is kept up to date. This helps to ensure staff members retain the skills and competencies they have and are encouraged to develop new ones.

Overall, the home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Any problem areas which may be identified are attended to and action taken. The local authority is reviewing the role and function of the home. A copy of that review and a development plan for the home is not in place. The home's manager and members of staff are not fully aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses nor are they fully aware of the progress being made with regard to the home's development.

Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits talks, where possible, to staff and young people. In addition, and where possible, the visiting officer talks with the parents or relatives of young people themselves. These visits help to ensure that the home is run properly and that young people are well cared for. In addition, the knowledge and understanding of parents and staff about what strategies may work to help young people develop their independence and maturity, is borne in mind.

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.