

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035235
Inspection date	26/11/2013
Inspector	Bill Drumm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	30/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

The children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The provider is a local authority.

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**.

Young people receive well planned and individualised care from an enthusiastic, child-focused and experienced staff team. Young people are involved in the care planning process and therefore have a good understanding of their needs and how to work with the home to achieve them. Staff have a range of strategies in place to help keep young people safe, and young people said that they feel safe living at the home.

The views of young people are regularly sought by staff and management through various forms of consultation. The results of the consultation are taken into account in the home's review of the quality of care and where possible changes are made. Where this is not possible, young people are given an explanation as to the reasons why.

Young people enjoy living at the home and experience positive and constructive relationships with staff. One young person who returned an inspection questionnaire said that they were very confident in sharing their thoughts and feelings with staff. Staff have a sound understanding of individual needs and tailor their practice appropriately. Individuals are making good progress from their starting points as a result of consistent behaviour support through restorative practice.

The management of the home is very competent and effective. The manager has a clear vision to maintain and develop the quality of care for young people. There are a number of monitoring processes in place which enable a thorough review of the service

One shortfall was found during this inspection. As a result, a recommendation has been raised to ensure each young person has a comprehensive, detailed and up to date pathway plan in place to aid their transition into adulthood.

Areas for improvement

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 who is eligible has an up to date and comprehensive pathway plan to aid their transition into adulthood. (NMS 12.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Overall outcomes for young people living at this home are good and each individual is making progress. Staff work with young people who sometimes display challenging and complex behaviour as a result of emotional crisis and past life experiences. Young people receive extensive support to achieve their maximum potential. Staff work tirelessly and consistently in supporting individual needs and to ensure young people are safe and stay safe. Young people have responded well to this support, and as a result, have shown a reduction in risk taking and anti-social behaviours.

Young people are actively encouraged to maintain good health and staff ensure all statutory health appointments are up to date. Where needed, young people benefit from psychological support from the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the looked after nurse for children as well as the family nursing service. One health professional linked to the home said; 'I feel the service is excellent. Staff provide a safe environment at all times, always placing the child's needs first. Staff are all professional, dedicated and provide a good role model for the child's future'.

Additionally, staff are consistent in implementing behaviour support strategies. This inspires young people to begin to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to develop alternative approaches in times of emotional crisis. In-depth discussions take place regularly between young people and their key-workers. This further strengthens young people's ability to develop both their emotional resilience and a positive self-view.

Since coming to live at the home all young people have, improved their attendance at school or college. Staff have high aspirations for all the young people in their care and they actively support young peoples' learning experiences. The ethos of the home promotes education and the benefits of structure and routine, in order to improve self-esteem and develop social skills.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with friends, family and those who are important to them. The home has had a positive impact on re-establishing contact with estranged family members of young people. This has been significant in the development of a sense of self and knowledge of their background. Staff actively promote friendships between young people and their peers. Friends and siblings are actively encouraged to come to the home and share meals and take part in activities as a group. One young person's social worker said; 'the place is very homely. The atmosphere is very relaxed and it feels like a proper family home. I can sense the young people who live there and are at ease and very well looked after'.

The home has an organised and formal process for teaching young people independence skills and activities for daily living. However, the participation of young people in learning these key skills is inconsistent. In addition, their pathway plans to aid their transition into adulthood are not kept up to date. This means that young people will not be fully prepared for independent living and may not make a successful transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

The home provides a good standard of care and support to young people with complex emotional and behavioural needs. Each young person has a detailed care plan in place and staff work determinedly with young people, who can sometimes display challenging behaviour, to support their emotional well-being and development. One young person's social worker said; 'this is an excellent staff team who are very committed to the young people they care for.' Detailed care planning and objective setting helps staff to support young people's emotional well-being through difficult periods in their life such as police investigations, court appearances or pregnancy. Young people are clear about what their placement at the home is meant to achieve and what support they can expect from staff.

Staff and young people relate very well to each other, and interactions between young people and staff were observed to be positive. Young people enjoy the company of staff and feel that they are consistently concerned about their welfare. Strategies are put into place to manage peer relationships in line with risk assessments. Positive behaviour is promoted well and individuals are making excellent progress in reducing risk-taking and anti-social behaviour.

Consultation with young people is effective in influencing the day-to-day running of the home. For example, one young person voiced their concern about the speed of the home's internet connection. As a result, alternative service providers are now being considered. Additionally all young people are asked their opinion about the quality of the care they receive from each member of staff. The information provided by them is used as a discussion point in the annual staff appraisal system. The needs and wishes of young people are taken into account in relation to the care they receive and the home they live in. This helps them to feel listened to and confident about raising any issues or concerns they may have.

Internal care plans are highly individualised and reflect each young person's needs, taking into consideration their culture, religion, gender and sexuality. There are clear strategies in place which address how these needs will be met in daily living.

Behaviour support plans are updated regularly in order to ensure successful approaches in dealing with challenging behaviour are consistently applied. Information is current, reviewed regularly and includes the views of young people.

Statutory reviews take place within timescales. The home prepares well for these and actively encourages young people to contribute to the consultation process in order to express their thoughts on their care and aspirations for their future. This ensures they are part of the decision-making process and are aware of any changes to their care plans.

The home promotes education well. For those young people still in mandatory education, educational placements are supported positively. Additionally those young people who attend college are equally supported. One member of staff said; 'we all have high aspirations for the young people here. We all want them to do really well for themselves'.

Proactive procedures are in place for young people who refuse or are reluctant to attend education. The home has strong links with local education providers as well as education support services. Young people who returned inspection questionnaires all said staff make sure they go to school or college and that staff help them with school work. Good and effective communication takes place regularly, the progress of individuals is monitored and any areas of difficulty that are identified are quickly addressed. This helps to support and promote the education of all young people living at the home.

Young people are encouraged to take part in a variety of purposeful activities in order to promote their inclusion in the local community. An example of such an activity is their involvement in a litter collection scheme organised by the parish council. Their involvement in such activities is commendable, it helps to improve their community presence and develop their self-esteem. Additionally, it allows for young people to develop relationships outside of the looked after system.

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. Young people are encouraged to enjoy a healthy lifestyle and to eat a well-balanced diet. As a result, the welfare and well-being of young people is safeguarded.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safeguarded by robust planning and risk management strategies. As a result, even the most vulnerable young people achieve a sense of safety. Young people confirm they feel safe and that staff promote their welfare. Risk assessments are completed prior to admission and are reviewed regularly to ensure the effectiveness of strategies in place. The review of risk assessments is a regular feature of staff meetings. This helps to ensure the consistency of safeguarding practice.

Young people have reported that bullying does not take place at the home. Positive behaviour is promoted at all times through good role modelling from staff and consistency in the implementation of boundaries and individual strategies. One young person's social worker said; 'I rate the care of my young person to a high standard. Relationships have been built and this allows my young person to be open and honest with staff. Rewards and sanctions are being put into place to encourage positive behaviour'. Young people have developed a mutual respect for each other and the staff.

Instances requiring restraint are infrequent. Staff are trained and skilled in de-escalation techniques which reduce the risk of physical intervention. When used, it is proportionate, in the best interests of the young person, and within legislative frameworks. Young people are consulted with following an incident of restraint to ensure their understanding of the reason why it was used, and also to explore alternative strategies in dealing with similar feelings and behaviours in the future. Sanctions are proportionate and relevant to the specific incident. The effectiveness of these measures is evaluated which means the manager can fully monitor the value of disciplinary measures implemented by staff.

There have been a small number of occasions since the last full inspection when young people have been reported as being missing from the home. Robust management strategies and the dedicated work of staff have seen a significant reduction in these instances. Furthermore, the home's manager is proactive in analysing the reasons why young people go missing and in ensuring risk assessments are reviewed promptly. Young people living at the home are therefore kept safe.

The home is well maintained and regular health and safety checks are carried out. There is a prompt response to any issue within the building. Therefore young people live in a home which is safe.

Leadership and management

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

The management of the home is robust and competent with one young person's social worker commenting that; 'staff are well managed and they all have excellent people skills, highly recommended'. The home's manager also has an in-depth action plan in place which identifies realistic goals and targets for both the staff and the

home. The home's manager and staff know what the strengths and weaknesses of the home are and how they want to continue developing the service.

Staff receive regular, formal supervision. Those spoken to said they felt well supported by the management team and enjoy an open and honest dialogue with senior staff. Monthly staff meetings take place to ensure consistent messages are conveyed to the team. This is also a forum to discuss behaviour support strategies for individual young people. Staff commented that they find these meetings essential in agreeing strategies to promote positive behaviour and in ensuring the best possible outcomes for the young people.

The manager and staff have a sound understanding of the needs of the individuals in their care. Staff are very child centred and outcomes focused. Young people's experiences at the home, since their admission, have had a significant impact on many aspects of their lives. This is demonstrated in successful transitions into independence for some, and the development of a positive self-view for others who have experienced emotional crisis.

The staff team receives good quality training. They are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and work consistently to achieve these and promote positive outcomes for young people. Communication between agencies is prompt and effective in ensuring all parties are kept well informed of young people's progress. A social worker confirmed they are kept up-to-date with information and that 'the home works really well in dealing with their young person's issues'.

The staff team work exceptionally well together and are committed to improving the life chances of young people in their care. There have been no new appointments to the staff team since the last full inspection. This helps to ensure consistent working practices and good teamwork. The authority does however, have good recruitment and selection procedures in place to help ensure that young people are kept safe from exploitation or abuse, should a vacancy arise at the home.

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.

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.