

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035387
Inspection date	13/12/2011
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	21/10/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 provides care and accommodation for up to six young people. The home is provided by a local authority and is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The registered manager and staff provide good quality care to young people. They enable them to achieve positive outcomes within a short time of admission to the home, particularly in relation to education and health. Young people are therefore given a more positive foundation to move on from, even though they may only live at the home a short time.

The staff team are knowledgeable and experienced and relationships with the young people are good. The team receives good support from the management and they receive training in a wide range of topics relevant to their role.

Young people are cared for safely but there are some shortfalls needing attention. The structure of risk assessments and the assessment of bullying are not sufficiently informative. Overnight security arrangements are incompatible with legislation as they do not enable young people to exit the building without the need of a key. The recording of occasions when young people go missing is not adequately informative about why they went missing and what has been done in response. However, in practical terms the staff respond proactively if any young person does go missing and they do what any good parent would do.

The staff team manage behaviour well, using rewards as well as occasional sanctions to encourage positive behaviour. The use of restraint is very rare and all the staff receive regular training in managing challenging behaviour.

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	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote	13/12/2011

(2001)	and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there. In particular this means that an exit door should not be routinely locked overnight in a manner which prevents young people from leaving the premises (Regulation 11(1))	
30 (2001)	notify Ofsted if any of the relevant events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place. In particular this relates to the outcome of child protection enquiries. (Regulation 30)	13/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- for each young person, conduct a risk assessment which considers the risks of them bullying others and being bullied by others (NMS 3)
- promote safety and welfare by ensuring that risk assessments include an estimation of the likelihood and seriousness of hazards that may affect young people (NMS 4.1)
- ensure records about when young people go missing describe the circumstances of their return, any reasons they may have given for going missing, and any action taken in light of those reasons (NMS 5.10)
- maintain a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15.2)
- ensure that new staff undertake the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards, commencing within 7 working days of starting their employment and being completed within 6 months. (NMS 18.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people achieve excellent outcomes, often within a short period of time since being admitted to the home. The home operates a task-based approach with a focus on promoting education, health and relationships with family and carers.

Young people gain a clear sense of identity. For example, the staff support them to take up sports and leisure interests that they are personally interested in. In some cases this has helped to transform young people's self-esteem. Young people feel their cultural beliefs are supported and, as one young person said 'the staff want us to do well'.

Young people achieve good outcomes in health. Soon after admission to the home

they receive a check-up with a doctor, dentist and optician. The staff provide useful information about health which is relevant to the age group. One of the staff coordinates the promotion of young people's sexual health. They also receive support from a nurse with responsibility for looked after children and they receive emotional support from the local child and adolescent mental health service.

Young people succeed in education. The staff work swiftly after admission to ensure each young person has full-time educational arrangements. One of the staff is a full-time education facilitator who works school hours during term time. This arrangement provides continuity and consistency for young people and as a result attendance levels are high. The local education authority also provides quick and effective support to keep maintain everyone in full time education. Young people receive incentives for attendance and achievement at school. Overall, the promotion of education can be summed up by one young person who said, 'the staff care about how well we do. There is something I'm interested in at school. I do it here at the home and the staff here back me up and praise me. They want us to do well and they show it.' Another young person said, 'education here is miles better for me now than it was before I came here. I now get transport to school and am doing well.'

During their time at the home, young people develop and strengthen relationships with their family and friends. For example, one young person said, 'the staff promote contact a lot. They give me a lift and I now see my family more often.' This helps to improve young people's self-esteem and provides a useful foundation for the future after they leave the home.

Young people learn useful skills that will help them when they are older and living independently. For those who are aged 16 or above the staff are developing a comprehensive leaving care preparation package based on government research and guidance.

Quality of care

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

Young people have a significant say in how the home runs and in the content of their own care plans. There are regular house meetings and these are chaired by the same member of staff in order to provide consistency. Young people said the meetings are effective in bringing about change. For example, one said, 'as a result of the house meetings we got pamper nights and got the food changed.' The young people's notice board displays a very wide range of useful information about children's rights and responsibilities. There is also information about the Children's Rights Director and about how to make a formal complaint. The registered manager also provides satisfaction questionnaires to young people once or twice a year and acts on their feedback.

Young people broadly get on well with each other. Relationships with the staff are good. Some young people and staff said that there was some bullying in the home. It is clear that if bullying does arise, the staff respond quickly and effectively.

However, risk assessments are not fully up to date or informative about the risk of young people bullying others or being bullied. Consequently the staff are not being sufficiently informed about this important information. The staff very rarely need to restrain young people. They do issue sanctions for unacceptable behaviour and these are fair. For example, one young person said, 'all of the staff are kind and helpful if I need to talk to them. They are also fair with me.' The staff reward young people for their behaviour in the home and for school attendance. These reward schemes are effective at promoting positive outcomes.

The staff enable young people to take part in a wide range of leisure activities. One of the young people summed this up by saying 'one of the reasons I like living here is because we can go on different activities. The staff help us to do the things we are interested in.'

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The home itself is well-kept, clean and in good decorative order. The atmosphere is homely and comfortable. Several young people said, 'I like my bedroom and have everything I need in there.'

A structured pre-admission system is in place which provides the registered manager with information about a young person on which to make an admission decision. This is based on assessment of any information about the young person and it also takes account of the needs of the current group of residents. If, after admission, the behaviour of a young person has an adverse effect on the other residents then the placement will be ended if necessary. This helps to protect the progress and welfare of the others. Young people visit the home for a look round and have a meal and meet the other residents and staff before moving in to the home. This helps them to feel involved and helps them to settle in better.

Young people are enabled to contribute fully to the reviews of their care plans. Before each care review meeting, the young person and key worker discuss any progress made since the previous meeting. The key worker also clarifies what the young person's views are so that they can advocate for them in the meeting. Outcomes of the meetings are written into the young person's care file so that all can be clear of any change in their needs and plans.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The staff care promote the safety of young people effectively.

Broadly speaking, the records of sanctions and restraints cover all the necessary issues. The current formats of recording books are being amended to reflect updated legislation. Young people write what they think about the use of the sanction or restraint in the records and the registered manager monitors any developing trends.

Young people said 'I feel safe at the home.' The staff receive regular training in child protection and understand how to respond to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of harm. They assess the hazards that may affect young people and record how to reduce risks. However, the assessments are not fully informative because there is no estimation of the likelihood or seriousness of each hazard.

The staff follow procedures which have been arranged with the local police should any young person fail to return to the home. These procedures reflect government guidance. In reality, the staff put a lot of effort into making sure any young person's welfare is safeguarded. One example of practice showed how staff acted as a good parent would do and they provided excellent levels of supervision and support for a young person while they were absent.

However, the records of missing persons are not fully informative because there is rarely a description of the reason given by a young person for why they went missing. The action taken by the staff in response to the reason given is also absent. There is therefore less assurance and accountability that the home is doing everything it can to address the causes of absence.

The home has a member of staff who has special responsibility for ensuring the home is safe. For example, an annual fire risk assessment is conducted and any identified shortfalls are addressed. Young people take part in regular fire drills.

All the exit doors are locked while young people are asleep. While this safeguards the home from unauthorised entry, the design of door lock means there is no door through which any young person can leave voluntarily. While there is no significant impact here, it is nevertheless in effect a restriction of liberty and as such is not permissible.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. There have been no new staff since the previous inspection. Young people take part in helping to decide who should be employed to work at the home and this helps to make recruitment decisions more rounded.

Leadership and management

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

At the previous inspection, Ofsted made three recommendations which the registered persons have now met. Consequently, the administration of medication is now safer; there is greater accountability for how individual young people's needs are met and leaving care arrangements for older children are now clearer.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose which sets out how it operates. This has recently been updated to reflect new national minimum standards and legislation. Young people said 'we receive a children's guide when we come to live at the home.' The children's guide is informative and it describes life in the home in an appropriate format. It has also been updated recently.

The registered manager is experienced and qualified and is providing effective and consistent leadership. The registered manager and deputy provide regular formal and informal support to the staff team. Each member of staff receives regular, recorded supervision and they have an annual appraisal of their performance.

The staff team also receives regular training in a broad range of subjects and they are able to select training in individual topics of relevance to their role. All the permanent staff are qualified to level three or beyond. Long term temporary staff are also studying for their qualification. Induction training is to the standard set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. However it is not fully robust because for these longer term temporary staff, it is not being completed within the recommended six months.

Staffing levels are good and enable sufficient time for the staff to have one to one time with young people, complete paperwork and conduct handovers. Young people said 'the staff are good at their job. There are always enough on duty, usually three of four. We know them well and there are not a lot of new people who come to work here.' This provides the young people with a good sense of continuity and security.

The staff team are experienced and competent and provide boundaries and a sense of structure. One young person summed this up by saying 'one of the best things about here is that life here is stable compared to how I was living before I came here.'

Quality assurance arrangements are in place. The registered manager asks the young people, parents and social workers to complete satisfaction questionnaires on a regular basis. These provide a numerical measure so that progress can be assessed over time. In line with legislation, an external visitor also assesses the quality once a month. The range of issues to be assessed by them has been widened recently to reflect updated national minimum standards and guidance. The registered manager also conducts their own formal monitoring on a regular basis in line with national legislation. The format for the monitoring reports has also been updated to reflect the requirements of legislation.

The registered manager and staff inform Ofsted of significant events, as required by legislation. As part of this they notify the regulator of the instigation of any child protection enquiries. However, they do not notify the outcome of these enquiries. As a result, Ofsted is less able to be aware of how these significant concerns are being addressed.

The home has a detailed business plan which sets out targets and developments for the next 12 months. However, such plans do not incorporate details about the continuation or changes of resourcing and functions of the home. While there are no grounds for concern, this nevertheless gives less assurance to interested parties about important information regarding the future operating of the home.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

