

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035477
Inspection date	16/05/2011
Inspector	Paul Scott
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	19/01/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This children's home is operated by a local authority and is registered to care for up to six children and young people of both genders, from the age of 13 years to 17 years. The home cares for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Services have also been developed to support young people in need, who are registered as refugees.

At the time of the inspection, six young people were living at the home. It was possible to speak to six of them about the quality of care being received.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a safe, caring and supportive home environment that enables them to make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. Care planning is highly personalised and young people are currently achieving some outstanding outcomes with their confidence, emotional resilience, personal safety, education and preparation for independence. Staff take every opportunity to gather young people's views about all aspects of their care, to listen to young people's opinions, suggestions and complaints and to always take them seriously and fully into account. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families and those from other agencies involved in young people's lives, to ensure that they get the right help, support and guidance they need on a daily basis.

Young people are very positive about the quality of care and support they receive from staff. They feel this is the best place they have lived and feel that staff always do their best to make sure they are kept safe and looked after very well. Positive relationships and trust exist between young people and their carers.

Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and demonstrate a good understanding of safe working practice to meet individual needs. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the risks young people may face. They manage these risks well, encouraging young people to keep themselves safe without limiting their opportunity to have experiences appropriate to their age and understanding.

The home is effectively managed and the manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of care for young people, ensuring continuous improvement and development. The manager makes good use of monitoring systems to review the quality of care provided and the outcomes for young people.

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
30 (2001)	ensure notification (in accordance with Regulation 30) of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiries involving any child accommodated in the children's home to Ofsted (Regulation 16.2 (c))	17/06/2011
5 (2001)	ensure Ofsted are notified within 28 days of any revision of the home's Statement of Purpose. (Regulation 5 (b))	17/06/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is an up-to-date record of information about each child's school attendance (NMS 8.7)
- ensure all people working in or for the children's home have references checked to assess suitability before taking on responsibilities. (NMS 16.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are making excellent progress in developing a positive and realistic view of themselves and are supported to gain a positive understanding of their lives and futures. Staff work hard with young people to help them understand the difficulties they have faced in their lives. Young people have strong and trusting relationships with staff and feel valued, and that staff accept them as individuals. As a result, young people are able to talk openly with staff about their feelings and frustrations. One young person said 'without staff I don't know where I would be'; 'Staff have helped me to get used to living in the United Kingdom, get into college to learn English and get a job, and are now helping me find a place to live'.

Young people's health care is very well managed with each young person receiving both routine and specialised healthcare support. Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and are always encouraged to take an active interest in and responsibility for looking after their own physical and emotional health. Young people are encouraged to eat and maintain healthy lifestyles and are offered excellent guidance from staff as well as detailed information on a wide range of health and social issues including sexual health, relationships and the dangers of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse.

Young people are supported and encouraged to gain an education and formal qualifications. Education plans are very individualised. The staff are particularly good at meeting the diverse needs of the young people living at the home. Young people understand the importance of learning and are making excellent choices about how to develop their abilities through education. One young person proudly said 'I am going to get five GCSE's'.

Staff and young people have worked hard to establish positive links within the local community and it is a notable quality that the young people are seen as an example to other young people living in the local area. Young people are enabled, encouraged and supported to participate in activities within their local and wider community which reflect their interests, religion and cultural needs. For example, one young person is supported to worship at the mosque he wishes to attend.

Very well organised and safe arrangements are in place for young people to maintain contact with their families and friends. Clear risk assessments for staff to follow ensure that contact is appropriately managed and that young people are kept safe. Staff proactively encourage young people to maintain positive relationships with the important people in their lives and have been particularly innovative when helping young people overcome the obstacles of maintaining contact with their family, for example establishing links with family overseas. Staff are very aware that young people may find seeing their family stressful and young people are suitably and sensitively supported.

Young people are being well prepared to make the successful transition into independence and adult life appropriate to their age and understanding. They are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves and are routinely involved in the running of the house including shopping, cooking and managing money. Pathways plans are individualised and clearly outline the work that needs to be done

with young people preparing to leave care. Staff show a good understanding of these plans and consistently put them into practice, supporting young people to access education, training, employment and housing opportunities.

Quality of care

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

Young people are thriving as they live in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people and are fully committed to enabling young people overcome the difficulties they may face in order to lead a happy and fulfilling life. Staff always place the needs of individual young people at the centre of their practice. Relationships between young people and staff in the home are genuinely warm and friendly. Young people say they 'get on well with all of the staff most of the time'. Staff spend a lot of time individually with young people and clearly enjoy working with them and doing things together. Staff work hard to ensure young people respect each other's values and identity. They talk openly with young people about issues of diversity and promote a culture of respect and acceptance within the home.

All young people are encouraged to express their views and take responsibility for their behaviour. Formal consultation systems are in place to ensure young people's views and wishes are actively sought and action is taken to support any reasonable request. Young people are confident that their views and opinions are valued. If young people are concerned or dissatisfied they are encouraged to make representation or complaint. All complaints are treated seriously and young people believe that staff will address matters effectively.

Staff plan for young people's care and accommodation exceedingly well. Young people's placement plans are individualised and provide a comprehensive picture of young people's personal needs and the support they require. The care planning and staff's day-to-day practice recognises young people as individuals with different backgrounds, interests, views and needs. Staff show an excellent knowledge of the diverse and complex needs of young people. This means young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs, cultural background and personal identity, including gender, faith and disability. The manager has established good support networks for all young people, ensuring young people have access to the right helping agencies to support them to achieve positive outcomes in their lives.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional health. Each young person benefits from having a comprehensive healthcare plan that details historic, current and future healthcare interventions. Young people have access to community health services and are registered with local doctor, dentist and optician. Staff have an excellent understanding of young people's specific health needs and ensure they are met on a daily basis. Staff are aided in providing good quality healthcare by external professionals in physical and mental health. These professionals provide advice directly to young people and indirectly by advice supplied to staff to aid positive outcomes.

Staff ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education and school attendance, although there is no up-to-date record of information regarding each young person's school attendance. Young people talk confidently about their educational abilities and clearly take pride in what they have achieved. Staff support young people in school by attending parent's evenings, events and performances. They have established strong links with schools and work effectively

with young people's teachers to challenge any barriers to young people's full participation in education; for example significantly improving attendance and providing home support to young people preparing for exams.

There is excellent consultation between staff and young people about their recreation and leisure pursuits. Young people are offered a range of in-house activities as well as encouraged to build their confidence in their abilities and talents by pursuing personal interests outside of the home. Young people said 'I like dancing. I have joined a dance club and I am dancing in a show'.

Young people live in a comfortable house that blends well into the neighbourhood. The house is clean, well decorated and furnished to a high standard. Young people are encouraged to take ownership of the home and treat it with respect and care. Young people say they 'like living at the home'. All young people have personalised their bedrooms and the home is made more homely by pictures of young people and staff displayed around the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm. Young people said they were 'happy and safe in the home' and 'it is better than other places they have lived'. They are actively encouraged to share their feelings and discuss any concerns and are confident that if they had any problems they could tell a member of staff about things. The home maintains good anti-bullying practices and all staff are vigilant to any signs of this. Young people say they 'are not bullied because staff don't allow it'.

Staff give young people's safety the highest priority. They are well trained in safeguarding and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know exactly what they need to do to keep young people safe. Comprehensive and detailed risk assessments and management plans enable staff effectively to protect young people from harm. Staff have a good knowledge of young people's vulnerability and the risks they face in the community and are very good at balancing the need for protection whilst enabling young people to take reasonable risks as part of their growth and development. As a result, young people are able to enjoy the same social experiences as other young people the same age, for example visiting a friend or going into town.

There are robust procedures in place for when a young person goes missing. Staff consistently put these into practice in the event of young person going missing from home. Strong links have been established with the local police who report that the home is very good at managing the absence of young people and that there has been a significant reduction in young people going missing. All young people have risk assessments on file, which address the risk of them going missing. Staff describe how they attempt to make contact with young people to check their safety and advise them to return to avoid further risk. When young people do go missing they return quickly.

The use of physical restraint is extremely rare. Staff receive training in physical intervention which focuses on de-escalation. Staff use these skills well to manage conflict. Positive relationships between young people and staff mean that disagreements and disputes are generally settled quickly. Staff have high expectations of young people and encourage them to take responsibility for their actions.

Staff working with children in the home are carefully selected and vetted. They undergo rigorous checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children, including a criminal record bureau disclosure. However, recruitment records indicate that one staff member who had been employed elsewhere within the organisation only had one reference on file. The manager was quick to make the appropriate checks to ensure they were suitable to work with vulnerable young people.

A comprehensive and robust safeguarding policy is in place which is linked with the Local Safeguarding Children's Board. All staff have completed up-to-date safeguarding training and know how to follow procedures. The manager has established good links with the Local Authority Designated Officer. Young people are well protected and any concerns about their safety or well-being are thoroughly

investigated. However, on one occasion the manager did not notify Ofsted of a serious incident.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by detailed and comprehensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular fire drills to ensure young people know what to do in the event of a fire. Clear and accurate fire safety records and checks on fire fighting equipment are up to date.

Leadership and management

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

The registered manager has ensured that the home has addressed the recommendation made at the last inspection. The home's development plan now clearly identifies where change could affect the home's operation or resources as a result of the restructuring and reorganisation of the responsible local authority.

Young people's needs are met within a well managed and maintained home. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose and young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. The manager ensures the Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and updated. However, the manager has not informed Ofsted of changes made.

The manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering good quality childcare that places the needs of the individual at the centre of the work that is undertaken. This has resulted in the young people making significant progress in many aspects of their lives, including keeping themselves safe, school attendance and educational achievement, emotional maturity and preparing for the transition into independence and adult life.

The operation of the home is well monitored. The home has monthly Regulation 33 inspections by a person independent of the home to inspect the quality of care provided, and to which the manager responds. The manager undertakes monthly Regulation 34 monitoring and uses these as part of the quality assurance for the improvement of the home. Young people's views are sought as part of these processes and are used to further develop care practice in the home.

The home employs an adequate number of staff who are appropriately trained, and effectively supervised and supported. All staff undertake mandatory training in key areas of practice and additional, more specialised training is provided to meet the emerging needs of young people. Staff are well supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Staff confirm they receive excellent support from the manager who is always available to offer advice, guidance and support. Supervision is regular and of a high quality to ensure they have the opportunity to develop their practice. In addition, team meetings take place monthly, to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

Young people's records are securely stored and provide a comprehensive picture of the individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information on them, including the relevant documents from the local authority.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.