

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035657
Inspection date	28/06/2012
Inspector	Valerie Shephard
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	27/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a privately run children's home. It is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to seven children or young people with emotional and/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 **outstanding**.

The home provides exceptional personalised care to young people which takes into consideration their individual and diverse needs. Despite their challenges, young people make extremely good progress in all areas of their development. Young people say they are happy in the home and feel safe. One young person said 'I like it here; it feels like a home, not an institution.'

Relationships between young people and staff are impressive. This serves to aid young people's development of trust, healthy attachments and improvements in behaviour. This home has a good reputation of working with young people who engage in risk taking behaviour. Staff are successful in helping young people to settle and refrain from going missing from home or taking part in criminal activity. This is a challenge when new admissions arrive with a history of this type of behaviour, however the staff team are persistent. Through use of positive behaviour management techniques they are generally able to help young people change their behaviour.

Staff fully support the health, educational, leisure and contact needs of young people. One social worker said 'staff go above and beyond for the young people in the home.'

The manager and the staff are committed to maintaining standards within the home and they have high expectations for the young people. Management are

inspirational, and are able to enthuse the staff team to provide the best possible care for young people to enable them to achieve the best possible outcomes.

A social worker said 'this is quite easily the best home in this area.'

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Staff and social workers say they can see substantial improvements in young people's appearance as their personal hygiene and self-care skills improve. Young people enjoy shopping for clothes and toiletries, and take a pride in their appearance. They generally take up opportunities to engage in activities such as football, snooker, boxing and gym.

Young people enjoy good health and attend their medical and dental appointments. Some young people who had not received dental care for some time, have visited dentists with appropriate support from staff. This has resulted in young people improving their health and gaining confidence by overcoming their fears.

All young people in the home engage in education and attendance is excellent. Young people have aspirations for their future such as commencing college or entering training. A previous care leaver is due to start work as one of the bank staff for the home. This young person has done well, is in employment and now wants to put something back into the home.

Young people contribute to the running of the home. There is good attendance at young people's meetings where discussions take place about topics such as meal choices, activities and holidays. Young people play a role in the recruitment of new staff. Candidates undertake a trial shift at the home as part of the recruitment process. Feedback provided by young people is a consideration in the selection process.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with their families and staff are trained to provide good quality supervision of contact, where appropriate. This helps to ensure that contact is a positive experience for young people. Contact assists them in the development of their identity and consequently helps them to gain a positive self-view.

Young people develop independence skills appropriate to their age and stage of development. They keep their bedrooms clean and tidy, are able to sort out their own washing and ironing and can prepare simple meals. Young people on independence plans are encouraged to develop life skills which will enable them to live independently, for example, cooking, laundry and money management.

Quality of care

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

The quality of the care in the home is outstanding. Young people's well-being is at the centre of practice, regardless of the challenges they pose. Staff enable young people to make decisions and are there to guide them where necessary. Staff put trust in young people, who know the consequences if they break this trust. Clearly there is respect between staff and young people. Young people say they 'like the staff and do not want to let them down.' One social worker said 'staff have a fantastic attitude and are absolutely excellent with the young people.'

Staff offer considerable support to young people to re-engage them with their education. There are well established links with schools and colleges and the organisation provides schooling for those young people who are temporarily out of education. Staff challenge schools where there are clear barriers to young people benefitting fully from their education, for example, in relation to exclusions. Staff praise young people for their educational achievements which serves to increase confidence in their abilities.

A good variety of food is available to meet diverse cultural tastes and young people have the opportunity to try new foods. Young people make their own breakfast and staff encourage them to help with the preparation of the evening meal. Staff promote personal hygiene and assist young people to care for their clothing and personal belongings. Staff provide specialist hair products for young people who need these.

Young people enjoy a very healthy environment with opportunities for exercise. Staff are persistent, and when it is difficult to engage young people in activities, staff involve them in activities they enjoy. For example, some young people jog with a member of staff, whereas prior to this there had been a reluctance to engage in any physical activity.

Young people are cared for in accordance with their care plans and staff address their individual diverse needs. A resource folder is available which details provision for a diverse range of needs such as places of worship or shops catering for different ethnic foods.

Staff consult young people about their views on living in the home. House meetings take place monthly where young people are asked about their wishes in relation to menu choices and activities. Equality and diversity topics are covered in these meetings which provide opportunities for young people to discuss a range of diverse issues within a safe environment. Young people know how to complain, however, in practice rarely do so as they feel able to raise issues with staff on a daily basis.

The home is in a pleasant residential area on the edge of a park with easy access to shops and leisure facilities for young people to enjoy. The living environment is comfortable, well designed and decorated. Young people have an input into the décor and furnishings of the home, which includes their own rooms. Bedrooms are personalised with posters and photographs and young people are clearly proud of their rooms.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe in the home and they say they feel safe. There are no incidents of bullying. Any incidents of missing from home are dealt with appropriately. Young people are welcomed back into the home and praised for their return. Discussions take place to establish where they have been while missing, and the reasons for their behaviour.

The staff team use very positive behaviour management strategies to encourage young people to behave appropriately. Staff use praise constantly and this is an effective measure with young people as it assists with the development of their self-esteem. Young people understand the consequences of their behaviour. While staff are trained in physical restraint techniques, the home rarely uses these as they feel praise and reward are more effective in managing young people. Clear behaviour management plans set out how young people are able to earn extra money for desired behaviour. Staff put trust in young people and allow them to take reasonable risks to assist with their development of social and life skills. For example, young people may be given money to buy items for the home. The expectation is that any change will be brought back and not spent. If the outcome is positive, young people are rewarded financially.

There is a highly robust system in place in relation to the recruitment of staff in the home. Suitable vetting takes place to help to ensure that young people are not exposed to adults who could cause them harm. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection procedures. They fully understand the protocols in relation to any child protection concerns they may have about a young person. Any safeguarding issues are promptly addressed by management through links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

The home provides a safe physical environment for young people. All young people have their own room keys and exercise their right to lock their bedrooms. There is free range of movement throughout the home and grounds, which serves to reassure young people that staff trust them.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from very strong and efficient leadership in the home. The running of the home is highly effective and the staff team feel well supported by management. Management have high expectations about sustaining improvements in the home and these are clearly communicated to the staff team. Management ensures that staff are up to date with new legislation and there is a focus on the home being pro-active in relation to changes. These measures ensure that young

people benefit from staff who are up to date with current thinking about excellent childcare practice.

The manager employs a range of tools to assist with monitoring the progress of the young people. There is regular consultation with young people as well as others such as social workers, parents and Independent Reviewing Officers. Questionnaires are used to good effect to gain views of young people as well as stakeholders.

The home's development plan is realistic and sets out achievable targets for the next 12 months. Examples include encouraging more young people onto the youth participation programme, and further involvement of young people in staff recruitment. These initiatives ensure that young people feel valued and that their views and opinions are at the forefront of planning and development.

All records within the home are up to date and stored securely. Young people's files are clear and easy to read and contribute to a full understanding of their experiences prior to admission. This ensures that staff have all the necessary information they need to enable them to provide excellent personalised care to young people.

The manager has addressed the one recommendation made at the previous inspection, which related to increasing opportunities for young people to engage in learning outside school.

The home is well maintained and kept clean and tidy. Maintenance is a high priority with prompt repair to any damage caused. Young people are encouraged take care of their home which assists them to feel a sense of ownership of their environment.

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.