

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037281
Inspection date	11/10/2012
Inspector	Deirdra Keating
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	07/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides medium and long-term placements for up to seven young people who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and operated by 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**.

The home provides care that fully meets the needs of each young person. This is delivered by staff that genuinely care for young people and provide a homely and caring environment. Young people make good progress in many areas of their lives. Several have lived in the home for a number of years and feel secure with staff and each other. Young people say that the quality of care is good and they are able to express their views in the knowledge staff will listen to them.

Good boundaries, that are tailored to individual needs, keep young people away from unsafe situations and risk taking behaviours. Staff implement consistent safety rules that young people understand and respect.

External professionals, parents and young people all speak highly of the home, the staff and the quality of care provided. While there are some areas identified for improvement these relate mainly to records, training and monitoring and do not detract from the good overall quality of care provided for young people.

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 all existing care staff have attained a level 3 qualification or be

working towards within 6 months of confirmation of employment (NMS 18.5)

- ensure a written or electronic record is kept by the home detailing the duration of any supervision held for each member of staff (NMS 19.5)
- ensure that records are stored securely and information about individual children is kept confidential (NMS 22.3)
- ensure that placement plans includes all aspects of children's individual identity (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that the manager monitors all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies. (NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from strong relationships with staff that are supportive and based on genuine care. This has helped young people feel emotionally secure and make considered life choices. Young people have explored their backgrounds and complex family dynamics with help from staff who work closely with other professionals. Young people like and respect the staff. A social worker said, 'the young person has benefitted from long-term attachments and very positive staff role models.'

Young people take part in a wide range of activities linked to their individual preferences. These include; swimming, football, horse riding and scouts. Young people benefit from the regularity and routine of these activities. This helps them develop confidence in their skills and understand commitment. Young people are proactive members of the community. They take part in local events, host celebrations and actively raise money for local causes. This helps young people develop a sense of community and gain an awareness of the needs of others.

Young people all have contact with family or other significant adults. Staff provide good practical and emotional support. Young people's families visit the home where they are made to feel accepted and welcomed. This helps young people know their families are valued. A parent spoken to said, 'I feel really welcomed here, it's like a happy family home type atmosphere.'

Young people are cared for within boundaries applicable to their individual age and stage of development. For example, younger children benefit from more help with bedrooms and support with personal care routines. Others go to bed later, tidy their own rooms, use public transport and have more freedom. This helps young people start to develop independence and autonomy which will support them into their adult lives.

Quality of care

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

Staff are long serving and provide good parent models. They communicate with young people warmly and with understanding. This is based on a clear understanding of each young person's individual needs and the impact of their past experiences on them. However, the written placement plans lack detail regarding young people's ethnicity and cultural origin.

Staff monitor the group dynamics carefully. They share information well during shift handovers to ensure that each young person is equally valued and accepted within the group. There are low-level disagreements but few incidents. Staff give honest feedback to young people to help them understand the impact of their actions on others. Sanctions are given and link closely to the event to ensure that young people can learn from their mistakes. At times restraint is used and follow up discussions are always held. This helps young people understand that there are constraints linked to some behaviours.

Staff work well to promote good routines and support education. This works well and consequently young people are well presented and attend school daily. Young people have made significant achievements in school given their starting points and academic history. Staff maintain healthy daily routines for each young person that provide security and stability in their lives. This is a key strength of the home. A social worker said that her young person is, 'very settled, he needs the firm structure and routine.' She is really pleased with the long-term progress made.

Staff consult with young people daily and encourage their views regarding the décor, menus, activities, television programmes and contact arrangements. Children's meetings take place regularly. Young people have facilitated these without staff, this demonstrates their understanding about group discussion and how it can work effectively.

The home is a large detached house situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a small town. Its location provides good amenities, public transport and a choice of activities for young people. There are large gardens with climbing apparatus, trees and wildlife. This encourages young people to take part in physical outdoor activity and benefit from healthy lifestyles. The interior has undergone major refurbishments and bedrooms for young people are freshly decorated, modern and comfortable.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are safe and say that they feel safe. They know how to use the 'I want you to know' procedure and say that staff are always ready to listen to any concerns or problems. Good risk assessments are in place for each young person. These are reviewed regularly and updated following any changes that impact on young people's safety. This means that staff identify potential triggers and minimise risks so as to keep young people safe.

Staff provide consistent boundaries and clear routines that protect young people from unsafe situations. Staff know where young people are and generally chaperone young people when they are out unless prior arrangements are agreed. These safe boundaries are understood well by young people and as a result young people do not go missing from the home and do not engage in unsafe behaviours. This helps young people feel secure and understand personal safety. Staff, external professionals and parents highlight the positive impact this has on young people's overall behaviour and general well-being.

The home provides a safe, secure environment that resembles a family home and meets young people's needs. Young people enjoy the personal space of their bedrooms and communal areas provide ample space for the number of young people at the home. Staff carry out safety checks and regular fire evacuation procedures. This protects young people from potential hazards and the dangers of fire.

Young people are cared for by an experienced staff team that undergo thorough checks to ensure they are suitable to work with children. This is underpinned by recruitment procedures and safeguarding policies that support young people's safety and welfare. Staff understand their responsibilities in the protection of young people including the need to reflect on and question one another's practice. This safeguards young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has an experienced Registered Manager who leads an established team of staff. There is a full team and low turnover of staff. This provides consistent care for young people who are able to make strong attachments to key staff. The staff team all undertake regular training days in a variety of courses to support them in their roles. The senior staff have social work qualifications, however, there are residential care staff that have no level 3 qualification despite being in post some time. Staff are supported regularly by supervision. Although the electronic record of supervision has several gaps. This means that issues raised in supervision may not always be followed up.

Generally records are clear and well written. Following a major refurbishment of the building numbers of children were low to allow building works to be carried out safely. This resulted in a settled and quiet period with very few incidents. The designated office on the ground floor provides secure storage for records. However, records pertaining to children's lives are at times left out with the office door open. This does not provide adequate confidentiality.

The senior staff are clear about the strengths and weaknesses of the home. The staff team have worked well to facilitate the general refurbishment. This has improved the facilities and décor of the home and the development plan includes continued redecoration of the lounge and hallway. This will improve the appearance of this part of the home and provide a more comfortable homely room for young people to relax

in.

The benefits to young people placed at the service are clear. Young people who have been at the service some time have made considerable progress in all areas of their lives. Staff have formed lasting relationships with young people and are proud of their individual achievements. Social workers highlight the benefit of the staff input and relationships with young people. All external feedback is very positive and there have been no complaints about the service.

Several requirements were made at the previous inspection. These have been addressed and there has been extensive refurbishment and redecoration of the home. A monitoring system has been established that includes consultation with young people and their parents. However, the internal monitoring of fire drill records and medication administration are not carried out with enough regularity to ensure that errors and deficiencies are picked up and addressed quickly.

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.