

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC039087
Inspection date	13/02/2013
Inspector	Elaine Clare
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	25/07/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This home is a 72-foot narrow boat that travels around the canal network. It provides care and accommodation for up to one young person with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by a private company.

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 **inadequate**.

The outcomes for young people are inadequate. Limited progress is being made in relation to some aspects of young people's development. This is mainly due to the lack of suitable education and as a result young people are falling behind in their educational achievement. Also there is little opportunity for young people to pursue any purposeful leisure activity as the boat is traveling around the British canal system and therefore they are unable to join any clubs or groups to develop any talent they may have.

Placement plans address young people's identified needs. The home provides adequate personalised and individual care. Key working sessions are meaningful and are used to target areas of need. A particular strength of the home is the involvement of young people in managing the boat, including steering and opening lock gates. Young people are generally happy with their placements and appreciate the help and support they receive.

The boat is not a homely, comfortable environment in which to live for any substantial period. It offers very basic amenities and at times, can be moored in extremely isolated areas with no access to any facilities. Access to medical help is often limited and recently could only be made by visiting a local accident and emergency department, as young people are not registered with a general practice in the local area. As a result Quality of Care is inadequate overall.

Young people are adequately safeguarded through safe care practices, which are supported by robust policies and procedures. Young people say that they feel safe.

Health and safety matters are fully addressed providing a safe environment for young people and staff. However, the boat has broken down a number of times which has resulted in a river rescue service coming out to repair it.

The manager is experienced and this benefits the young people. Staff receive adequate training and supervision. The manager and staff work positively with other professionals to bring about the best possible outcomes for the young people accommodated. They ensure that communication is good and any concerns of the young people are shared and acted upon in a timely fashion. The previous recommendation have been acted upon, and appraisals have been completed for all staff.

Five requirements have been made to help improve outcomes for young people and the quality of care; and five recommendations have been made to improve standards of care further.

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
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated within the children's home in particular by ensuring that children make use of educational facilities that are appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18(1)(a))	18/03/2013
18 (2001)	promote the educational achievement of children accommodated in the children's home in particular by ensuring that the routine of the home is organised so as to further children's participation in education, including regular attendance at school and participation in school activities of children of compulsory school age or regular attendance at college where applicable (Regulation 18(1)(b))	18/03/2013
18 (2001)	ensure that children accommodated in the home are encouraged to develop and pursue appropriate leisure interests; and are provided with appropriate leisure facilities and activities (Regulation 18(2)(a)(b))	18/03/2013
31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally; and kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31(2)(d)(e))	18/03/2013
31 (2001)	ensure the children's home is suitably furnished with adequate living, storage and communal space to meet the needs of the	18/03/2013

	children accommodated (Regulation 31(4)(a))	
--	---	--

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people have prompt access to doctors and other health professionals, including specialist services, when they need these services (NMS 6.4)
- ensure prescribed medication is only given to the child for whom it was prescribed and in accordance with the prescription (NMS 6.14)
- enable young people to make and sustain friendships with young people outside the home, which may involve friends visiting the home and reciprocal arrangements to visit friends' homes (NMS 7.6)
- ensure the home is situated in an location that supports its aims and objectives and proposed models of care for children and young people. This includes children being able to access external services, recreational activities and to maintain and develop relationships with family and friends (NMS 10.1)
- record in writing and regularly review risk assessments, particularly those relating to staff who have not previously not worked with the young people (NMS 10.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **inadequate**.

The day- to- day lives of young people is the main focus for staff and as a result young people are happy and they make good progress in some areas. Areas of progress include the development of self-esteem, learning boat skills and keeping themselves safe. Young people enjoy their time on the boat and find the whole experience very positive.

Young people enjoy adequate physical health. For example, one young person has benefitted from no longer taking illegal substances. While some young people continue to smoke tobacco, there is a willingness to cease, with staff offering young people assistance and guidance with smoking cessation. Young people's medical histories are chased and staff are fully aware of any current and on-going health concerns.

Initially young people are not registered with a local general practitioner, as it is sometimes unclear how long a young person may reside on the boat, or where the boat may be when a young person needs to seek medical attention. Recently a young person needed medical advice and had to attend a local hospital for treatment. This is not ideal as it prevented the young person having prompt access to their own doctor. Furthermore, the treatment prescribed was not given in

accordance with the prescription, which prevented the young person's condition from improving.

At first, young people coming to live on the boat may not always have a clear plan in place for them, as it is not always clear how long they are to remain in the placement. So during this period no education is provided. The placing authorities are made fully aware that young people do not receive education during this initial phase. Young people can arrive at the boat in crisis and may not be in a position emotionally to contemplate any type of formal education. Others arrive at the boat having being excluded from school or having not attended school for some time. Staff nurture the young people and start to build some foundations, improving their self-esteem and confidence.

Following a period of stability, and negotiation with the placing authority, education can be offered from the organisation's own school but this is minimal and falls far short of national guidelines. For example, one young person was given six hours education a week. A member of staff came onto the boat to teach them. Young people spend most of their week with staff driving the boat from one marina to another around the UK. As a result, young people do not benefit from educational attendance and achievement in line with their peers, or from gaining vocational certificates and awards from alternative educational programmes.

One young person wrote: 'I have enjoyed my stay on the boat but I would like to go home because I'm missing out on school although I have learnt a lot here I'm missing friends and my normal routine.'

Young people benefit from opportunities to contribute to the home as they learn about looking after the boat, operating locks and steering the boat with adult supervision. There is little opportunity to contribute to the wider community as young people are very transient within the placement. They are never in a position to establish friendships with peers because they constantly need to move on.

Young people can enjoy positive contact with those who are important to them. Staff generally make such arrangements in accordance with placing authority agreements. Parents or relatives are encouraged to maintain positive relationships with the young people, but for practical reasons this can not be on the boat. Instead, young people are often taken to another place where a visit has been arranged.

Staff support young people to develop self-care skills from the point they move in, such as getting involved in cooking and managing their own laundry. Young people benefit from a wide range of strategies to ensure that they acquire practical and life-skills, such as shopping on a budget, to prepare them for their eventual move to independence.

Quality of care

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

Young people and staff enjoy positive relationships with each other. Young people do not have key workers, because, they enjoy close relationships with all the staff. Young people learn to develop appropriate social skills. One young person stated: 'It is good here if you want to be helped.' Effective role modelling plays an important part in helping young people learn to behave appropriately and respectfully. The staff are confident in managing the issues and dynamics sometimes presented by a challenging young person.

All young people understand their wishes may not always be met. Staff take time to explain the reasons why, using language and rationale which is appropriate for the individual. Complaints processes are clear, readily available and understood. Young people say the staff are very approachable. They routinely seek out staff as well as the manager, and confirm they can easily contact their own family members and social workers in private. This creates an open and transparent environment, within which young people understand and value their rights to be heard.

Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their own health needs as is appropriate to their age and understanding. Young people benefit from staff working very hard to encourage them to make safe and appropriate choices. Staff work alongside any agency that offers support to the young people, for example a substance misuse service.

The home provides few educational opportunities and does not make good use of its organisation's own registered education provision, home tutoring arrangements, or local private education resources. Responses to young people's presenting educational needs are not creative and have not been personally tailored, to provide young people with a service that suits them as individuals. This contrasts with the creative and tailored approach taken to developing young people's social and emotional needs.

Young people enjoy a limited range of leisure activities, both within the home and the local areas. These include fishing, playing cards or, if moored near to a town, the cinema. The care planning process actively seeks to discover young people's preferred hobbies and interests. Yet the manager was not aware that one young person was a Thai boxer. Opportunities for them to attend such a boxing club would be very few while in residence on the boat, as it is not moored in one place. The manager stated that the boat can travel to a particular place and be back there the following week, but as yet this has not happened.

The boat is an old narrow boat which offers very basic facilities and amenities. Conditions are cramped and offer little privacy while on board. For example, the toilet and showering facilities are sparse and undignified. The home's location is, at times is exceedingly isolated with no nearby conveniences, or any means of travelling to any, as staff have no access to a vehicle. The boat is not homely and comfortable to live in for any significant period. It is not designed to provide access to the necessary range of facilities and activities which will promote young people's development. The boat has had to be repaired a number of times over the last six months. While it is acknowledged that money has been spent on repairing the boat,

this has only been to bring it to a standard to remain canal worthy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe within the boat. Staff receive the training and guidance they need in order to protect young people from possible sources of harm, neglect and abuse. Such topics are covered during staff induction periods and thereafter. All staff receive on-going safeguarding training. The home's policies and procedures for child protection are congruent with local authority guidance and staff know how to implement them.

Staff implement clear procedural guidance in the event of young people being missing from the home. The guidance of the authority and the police local to where the boat is moored at the time is followed in practice. Staff are very clear about the reasons why young people go missing and as a result there have been very few such incidents. When such incidents do occur, staff take proactive measures to secure young people's safe return as quickly as possible. For example, looking in areas known to be frequented by the young person.

Young people understand the rules and behavioural expectations of the home. Any serious behaviour management issues are handled well by staff, without having to resort to outside assistance, although this remains an option if safety is compromised. The organisation's ethos, that continues to develop, is to work positively and patiently through difficulties. Reward systems for good behaviour are in place. Recognisable boundaries are laid out in the information given to young people at the beginning of their placement. All staff have received training in the organisation's preferred method of physical intervention.

Adequate systems promote the safety of young people, staff and visitors within the home. The boat has a safety certificate which has to be shown to any British Waterways official on demand, or when mooring at a marina. There is regular servicing of electrical and fire safety equipment and young people are involved in regular fire drills and discussions about fire safety. This ensures that they understand the importance of evacuating the boat quickly in the event of a fire. There is good promotion of appropriate risk assessment, both in relation to the boat itself and to young people's presenting behaviours. However, these have not always been signed by staff and therefore it is unclear if all staff have read and understood them.

Staff recruitment processes are thorough and ensure that young people are safeguarded from contact with unsuitable adults.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a permanently employed, experienced Registered Manager, who is

also a qualified skipper. The home does not use volunteers or agency staff but does use a pool of casual staff and this results in young people not always being looked after by a consistent team. There are some difficulties recruiting staff members to work on the boat, as current shift patterns mean that staff have to be aboard for a number of days. Also it is such a specialised home that for many living and working on it is not compatible with their lifestyle. The manager has recently tried to address this by placing job adverts in boating papers and magazines.

The one recommendation from the previous inspection has been addressed. The manager has undertaken appraisals on the staff team. Staff feel the manager also supports them through more informal routes, such as team meetings and ad hoc discussions.

The staff team receive regular supervision which they say is of a good quality. Staff have the skills to meet young people's needs and they say they are well supported by their manager. Two staff members are also qualified boat skippers. The Registered Manager ensures all staff are up-to-date with relevant training and that any refresher courses are duly booked.

The home's Statement of Purpose contains sufficient information to inform placing authorities, parents and staff of the service that is offered. Placing social workers say that the staff: are very good at sharing relevant information with them about the young people's placements; provide good support to young people to express their views at their meetings and reviews; and that young people have built up some very positive relationships with staff, which have supported them to make positive progress in this placement.

Records are stored securely, all of them are clear, and up-to-date. The manager is fully aware of her legal duties and responsibilities. Incidents which meet the criteria for external notification are readily communicated to Ofsted and placing authorities in the interests of safeguarding the young people at the home.

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.