

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC039673
Inspection date	05/12/2013
Inspector	Stephen Trainor
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	24/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 children's residential unit is operated by a local authority and provides care for up to six young people of either sex aged from 11 to 17 years. The unit takes emergency placements. Placements are also available for young people bailed or remanded by a court.

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's aims and objectives are clearly being fulfilled. Young people are happy and content living at the home. Relationships between young people and between staff and young people are excellent and each young person provides their best cooperation. Young people show good insight into their personal circumstances and the positive experiences they receive change the way they lead their lives.

All the young people receive a very high standard of care and this means they commit to their placements; work hard; take responsibility for their behaviour; achieve and develop to reach their potential. Individuals are clear about the arrangements for them; are aware of plans and programmes and make excellent progress. Young people grow in confidence from their experiences. Reviews take place frequently. Young people are involved in any decision-making that impacts on aspects of their lives. A recent change of circumstances prompted a review of some educational arrangements.

All the young people state that they feel safe while living at the home. There is excellent safeguarding afforded to residents from the clear and agreed strategies and protocols that staff implement. There are very few behaviour management problems. Young people's efforts are rewarded and this helps to change behaviours. Young people are cared for by an experienced, competent, and highly motivated team of staff. Management support is extremely well coordinated. This is especially evident through the appraisal process which ensures staff's skills sets are constantly being developed.

The young people are extremely relaxed within their home. They are equally confident when participating in activities and supporting charity organisations in the community. Young people gain important life skills from the start of their placement and develop self-knowledge, self-help skills and improve their self-esteem by the time they leave the home. Young people fulfil their potential through engaging in their well-focused, high quality placement plans.

Quality assurance monitoring reports are comprehensive and provide an in-depth analysis of information and evaluation clearly demonstrating that the home's management have the capacity to plan continuous improvements. This service has a massive impact on the lives of each young person and improves their life chances and future prospects. Young people's views are consistently gathered and these influence the home's operation and future direction. Collaborative working arrangements set up between the home, young people, health professionals, school and college tutors all contribute to securing extremely positive outcomes. Include a brief summary about the recommendation made.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure each young persons personal education plan identifies the arrangements for their education and related support so that they have access to the full range of education services; specifically, give full consideration to completing a statement of special education needs for those young people whose arrangements have changed recently. (Volume 5 Section 2.116 & 2.117)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people experience stable placements and make significant progress in many areas, including their social presentation, self-awareness and taking responsibility for their behaviour. As a result young people develop and mature; grow in confidence and learn to make responsible decisions. Young people make better and safer decisions from the extremely well-coordinated staff support they receive.

Young people achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances. Some young people gain skills to mentor others. Young people build their social resilience and life skills from the start of their placement. It is clear that young people can motivate themselves; especially to attend meetings, where they express their views with some confidence.

Some changes to the peer group occurred between inspections. The young people have settled in quickly as they realise the benefits they gain when they fully engage with their placement plan. Young people enjoy good health and select to follow a healthy lifestyle. Young people take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. All young people are familiar with their health arrangements; are aware of the contents of their health plans and attend their appointments with health professionals.

The young people are optimistic about their futures. Young people gain many competencies and life skills through good quality in-house independence and social skills training programmes. Young people are very well prepared for their futures and fully aware of the options open to them when they reach a suitable age to leave. Young people are placed at the centre of decision making and this allows them to work at the pace ideally suited to them. Transition plans for some young people are at an advanced stage. Young people have confidence in their skills to live more independently.

All young people living at the home are treated fairly and staff practice is capable of supporting their individual needs. Young people value staff support and this is especially evident in their relationships with key workers who encourage young people to always do their best. Young people gain tremendous benefits from the high levels of emotional support they receive. This is particularly evident in maintaining relationships with family and friends and this reduces risk-taking behaviours. Young people successfully manage their relationships with friends and this allows them to gain permission to stay out overnight as part of their contact arrangements.

Young people's individual circumstances are taken into consideration when agreeing education programmes. Individual approaches effectively support young people's needs. Young people remain enthusiastic about their education and this leads to high levels of attainment and vastly improved attendance. This tremendous achievement is brought into focus when looking at young people's past disrupted education experiences. Some older residents have been successful in completing their secondary school education securing some good GCSE examination results.

Quality of care

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

A staff member talking about introductions and some changes to the group dynamic commented, 'It doesn't matter who comes in, the home's ethos works. We have a varied approach; we adapt and adjust to many diverse situations.' Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff which enable them to engage positively and make good choices, for example, getting the best from their placement. Staff are skilled and show great insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result, young people appreciate and value the efforts of staff and work closely with them to plan their futures. Impact risk assessments and the supporting referral and introduction procedures successfully maintain a compatible peer group dynamic.

Young people confirm that they are treated with respect. Young people agree that the rules are fair. Young people demonstrate that they possess some very good negotiation skills. High quality assessment and planning result in young people's specific needs being met. Social workers receive frequent progress updates. Staff work extremely well in partnership with many different professionals and agencies to implement plans. Communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is highly effective. The overall response being taken to support young people's needs is excellent. All work is at the pace ideally suited to the individual child.

Each young person's educational potential is supported by proactive staff practice. The home's philosophy of care promotes the development of educational potential. Care staff continually emphasise the importance of young people gaining the best education. There is tracking of each young person's educational arrangements through established points of contact with schools and colleges. Learning methods ensure young people develop key skills suited for adult life and the world of work. All achievements are celebrated and this continuously builds young people's self-esteem. Extra funding is provided to support GCSE revision when needed. A statement of special educational needs is being considered for a younger resident.

Young people's personalities prosper at this home. They make big improvements in their behaviour and all are relaxed and confident in their placements. Young people learn how to contribute to the wider community through participation programmes, including involvement in charity work. Young people value difference and this means they provide support to their peers. Some good project work has been completed with younger residents about 'difference' which helped them to understand wider equality matters. Staff show genuine care and concern for the young people above and beyond what would be reasonably expected. For many young people this provides a welcome 'life-line' even after they have left.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that complaints, if made, are responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between grumbles and serious complaints. Young people have skills to sort out minor matters positively between themselves. This includes discussion or by raising matters during frequent in-house meetings.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted. The key worker role is well developed to deliver and support health promotion work. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication, including prescribed and non-prescription medication. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. All staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the high quality of care being provided. The looked after children's nurse visits regularly and this allows support to be targeted to the times young people are most in need. Young people have access to excellent dentist support benefitting tremendously from specialist orthodontic work when needed.

Specialist mental health arrangements are accessed, when needed, to support young people's development.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people benefit from a permanent, experienced and stable staff team. There have been no changes to the staff team between inspections. Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring only suitable people work with young people. Equally good practice ensures the vetting of visitors to safeguard young people.

Health and safety issues are managed well, ensuring young people and staff remain safe. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the home safely. Staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. There is a comprehensive audit of health and safety matters carried out. All activities are risk assessed. The accommodation is maintained to an extremely high standard with young people valuing their 'home' meaning there is very little damage.

Young people confirm that they feel safe living at the home. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour; show initiative and understand how they contribute to the home's operation. Young people develop skills that enable them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in.

Telephone and internet access is managed in accordance with agreed risk assessments. Local police have supported e-learning delivering interesting awareness training for the young people. Young people are supervised properly at all times and kept safe. Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. They have confidence that staff will respond to any bullying that may occur. There is very good interaction and sensible discussion around difference, allowing members of the peer group to maintain a positive self-view. All young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns.

Well-coordinated safeguarding work supports children in making choices on how to lead their lives. Staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take when an incident arises. This allows young people to live in a safe and friendly environment. Young people have suitable safeguarding information. Policy and procedural guidance is consistent with that of the local safeguarding team's protocols. Good relationships are established with the safeguarding Local Area Designated Officer (LADO). The Registered Manager highlighted a potential safeguarding concern to LADO between inspections and this allowed an intervention plan to be implemented to support some relationships outside the home.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from home are well established and a protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. Reports made to local police are in -line with the established protocol. Strategies have been successful in reducing the number of times young people go missing or are absent without permission. Very few reports have been made showing that young people can make positive lifestyle choices. The home's management attend meetings with the local police missing from home coordinator to review matters affecting the home. The management team review all incidents and young people have the opportunity to reflect on any incidents they are involved in and this helps also them to change behaviours.

There are no concerns relating to how the home manages the young people's behaviour. Young people respond very well to praise and rewards and this lessens the need for disciplinary measures. Very few sanctions are applied for misdemeanours. Staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques. Comprehensive records are held on all interventions.

Leadership and management

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

Further enhancements have been made to the outstanding practice that was demonstrated at the last two full inspections. There is a clear vision for how the home should operate and achieving positive outcomes remains central to all practice. Young people gain tremendous benefits from the experiences provided by a highly competent staff team. It is a strong, child-focused service that is conducive to young people developing and maximising their potential.

The management team constantly reviews statutory guidance and is quick to respond to change. New initiatives are introduced frequently. Staff are responsive to the specific needs and circumstances affecting both young people and their families. This service is managed by a very experienced and fully qualified manager. All partners confirm communication is highly effective.

Staff morale is excellent and energy levels high. Staff clearly 'go that extra mile' to provide the best possible experiences. Young people gain optimum benefits from a capable staff team. All staff hold relevant qualifications. The young people have full confidence in the staff and know who is responsible for them at all times of the day and night. Staffing levels are maintained. Shift patterns ensure excellent continuity with routines and procedures. The staff team is consistently supportive, attentive and sensitive to the care they provide for young people. All levels of staff influence and shape the service with their ideas and initiatives.

Practice is developed by a management team that is perceptive in identifying the home's strengths and the areas where it could perform better. The responsible authority closely monitors the home's practice, operation and management using

defined quality assurance measures. A comprehensive written and verbal self-assessment of the service was provided. The home's service history shows the assessment to be accurate. The home's management team continually reflect on their practice and the home's operation. The views of the young people, staff, parents and partners are being captured by different methods including visits made to the home under the requirements of regulations 33 and 34. Reports produced make sense of the available data. The full impact and value that living at this home has had on young people's lives is represented within the reports. Some realistic and challenging targets are outlined within the home's development plan.

Records at this home show good clarity in how staff are managed. Staff confirm that supervision takes place. Systems for staff personal development and appraisal are established and this helps staff to further enhance their skills sets and support training aspirations. There is access to higher level training. Access to training keeps staff at the forefront of practice.

Young people's placements are stable and the home's service history shows an excellent record in compliance. No requirements or recommendations for improvement were set at the last inspection. There is an effective system in place to notify persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events. Two notifications were reported transparently and Ofsted was provided with clear outcome statements. The Registered Manager maintains on-going communication with Ofsted on significant events that affect the service. One complaint was received by Ofsted between inspections. Discussions quickly resolved some difference in views and no further action was needed.

Staff practice is supported by comprehensive written guidance, policies and procedures. These documents are also accessible through the responsible authority's intranet. Information is written in plain English. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with Regulations. Aims and objectives, especially those linked to education and health, are very clear. The excellent ethos and culture established clearly fulfils the service aims and allows young people to build a great deal of resilience against the many challenges they face as they work towards their next placement and in securing a brighter future.

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.