

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC039689
Inspection date	31/05/2012
Inspector	Paul Scott
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is a local authority children's home. The home provides care and accommodation for six young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service 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**.

Young people receive a good level of care. They live in a safe and supportive home that enables them to make good progress in most aspects of their lives. Care planning and care practice is highly individualised to ensure young people's individual needs are known and routinely met. Young people talk positively about their experiences of living in the home and acknowledge that they have made progress because of the support they receive. One young person said, 'Staff are very supportive. They are always there to give me support. Sometimes more support than I need.'

Relationships between staff and young people are a notable strength. Young people feel valued and respected as individuals whose opinions and views are listened to and acted upon. They believe staff genuinely care about their safety and well-being and confirm that they feel safe. Young people are well protected by a number of robust safeguarding procedures and staff who give young people's safety the highest priority. Young people confirm that unsafe situations and behaviour are well managed by staff who place their needs at the centre of everything they do.

Leadership and management of the home is strong. The staff team is well established and knowledgeable about young people's needs. Managers know what the home does well and are keen to address any identified shortfalls, develop the service they provide, and support young people to make progress and achieve their potential. Some areas for improvement have been identified. These include improving Regulation 34 reports and maintaining up-to-date education records.

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
34 (2001)	ensure the system for the review of quality of care provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities. (Regulation 34 (3))	05/07/2012

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 educational progress and attendance. (NMS 8.7)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from well-planned care which is personalised to their individual and specific needs. They are well supported to gain an understanding of their lives and positively plan for the future. Staff work hard to establish and maintain positive relationships with young people. They use these relationships effectively to talk to young people about their lives and their experiences in care. This improves young people's emotional resilience and confidence to enable them to begin to plan positively for the future. One young person said, 'I understand why I am in care. Sometimes I get upset but staff help me. They talk to me and cheer me up. Staff have really helped me and I am a different person now. I have made loads of progress.'

Young people's health needs are well managed. They enjoy well balanced diets and understand the importance of taking regular exercise to keep themselves fit and healthy. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their health and develop an understanding of how risk-taking behaviour, such as drinking alcohol, can have a negative impact on their general well-being. When risk-taking behaviour is identified, the staff are quick to engage specialist services to further enhance young people's knowledge and understanding and encourage them to make safe and healthy choices.

There are mixed outcomes for young people in respect of their education. All young people are encouraged and supported to attend an appropriate education or training

placement. Staff work hard to help young people overcome their barriers. They provide young people with individually tailored support, relative to their age, personal circumstances and ability. A number of young people talk proudly about the progress they have made. One young person spoke positively about his achievements at college and his plans for the next academic year, whilst another spoke optimistically about the grades he is likely to achieve in his GCSE's.

Well organised and safe arrangements are in place for young people to maintain contact with their families and friends. Staff support young people both emotionally and practically with travel arrangements. One young person said, 'staff give me good advice about relationships with my family. They encourage me to see the ones that are positive and are good at explaining why I can't see certain family members.' Staff work in a co-ordinated way with families to ensure contact is as positive an experience as possible.

Young people are being well prepared to become more independent appropriate to their age, level of understanding and risk. All young people are given the opportunity to develop their living skills in preparation for independence and adult life. Staff are proactive at ensuring pathways plans are in place for 'eligible' young people. This ensures young people are given the right formal support to prepare them for leaving home. One young person said, 'Staff are currently helping me get ready to leave. I am ready to leave but I am nervous. I know my plan and already have a good place to live and a college placement. Staff have helped me with this. I know they will be around to support me when I leave and that I will always be welcome here.'

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from being cared for by an experienced staff team who demonstrate a commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Relationships between staff and young people are extremely warm and friendly. One young person said 'Staff are great. I have really good relationships with staff. They don't just do it as a job, they really care. I respect staff because they respect me.' Relationships between young people are extremely complex and staff do their best to manage these effectively. Staff discuss difficult issues with young people and challenge inappropriate behaviour that arises as a result of arguments and disputes. They encourage young people to respect each other as individuals. This enables young people to develop socially acceptable behaviours, which will help them engage and sustain current and future relationships.

Young people confirm their views are regularly sought and acted upon. Staff work hard to ensure young people have the opportunity to make decisions about their lives and influence the way the home is run. For example, staff provide young people with opportunities for group and one-to-one discussions, including keyworker sessions and regular young people's meetings. A designated member of staff has the responsibility for ensuring young people's requests are acted upon. Any cases where

it is not possible to act upon young people's wishes are carefully explained to them. If young people are concerned or dissatisfied they are supported to make a complaint. Young people confirm they know how to complain and say their concerns are always taken seriously and appropriately dealt with.

Young people's care is well planned. There are clear procedures for introducing young people to the home, the staff and other young people living at the home. Care planning and staff's day to day practice recognises young people as individuals with different cultural backgrounds, personal identity and individual needs. Young people's needs are well documented in their individual plans that have been reformatted to fit in with the National Minimum Standards. Plans are regularly reviewed and amended to ensure they accurately reflect young people's progress as well as their current and emerging needs. Young people have a good understanding of their plans and are given ample opportunities to be involved in all aspects of care planning. Staff have a good knowledge of young people's specific needs and provide good support to ensure young people receive an individual plan. Good links with social workers and other important people ensure a multi-disciplinary approach is taken to all aspects of care planning. For example, when there are concerns about young people's placements, strategy meetings are convened to discuss and agree the best and safest way to support young people.

Young people benefit from living in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. Comprehensive health plans that detail historic, current and any known future healthcare interventions are used. This means staff have a good understanding of young people's individual needs and ensures they are met on a daily basis. Young people have access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Good links have been established with specialist healthcare professionals. These services are used effectively to provide direct support, guidance and advice for young people on a range of health-related topics including alcohol misuse, smoking cessation and sexual health. This ensures young people are equipped with the right information to make decisions about their own physical and emotional well-being.

Staff ensure that the daily routine supports young people's participation in education. Arrangements for education are very individualised to ensure young people are given maximum opportunity to succeed in an appropriate academic environment. Most young people talk confidently about their educational abilities and clearly take pride in what they have achieved. They say they receive good support from staff. Staff have established positive links with a diverse group of education providers. They work with education professionals to ensure barriers to young people's learning are minimised. For example, staff have worked with education providers to ensure young people have the right support to enable them to sit their GCSE examinations.

Young people are encouraged to engage and participate in purposeful and enjoyable leisure activities. They are offered a wide 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. For example, one young person said, 'staff helped me get into American football. I am really good at this and often get man of

the match'.

Young people live in a large, comfortable house that is appropriate to meet the needs of the young people living there. It is located on the outskirts of a small town with good access to local shops, recreational and educational amenities. The house is clean and very well maintained. Young people are encouraged to take ownership of their 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 in different areas. A number of young people have decorated the garden shed with brightly coloured flowers and are in the process of developing a vegetable garden and wild flower garden.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff give young people's safety the highest priority. Young people say they feel safe and that staff always do their best to keep them safe. The provider has good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff are trained in child protection and are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. They demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to protect young people's safety. Where particular risks are identified, well written risk assessments are recorded to help staff understand what action to take to minimise the identified risks. These are consistently put into practice. This develops young people's understanding and reinforces to them that adults are concerned. One young person said 'I always feel safe. Staff always do the right things because they care. They encourage us to keep ourselves safe and do their best to distract us from putting ourselves at risk.'

There are extremely robust procedures in place for when a young person goes missing from home. Strong links have been established with the local police who report that the home is good at managing young people's absence. Staff clearly understand the reasons young people go missing and have identified circumstances when young people put themselves at risk, including sexual exploitation. They have used this information by working collaboratively with the police and safeguarding professionals to ensure the right action is taken to keep young people safe.

Young people have reported bullying behaviour. They confirm that staff address bullying when it happens. Staff are acutely aware about the impact of bullying behaviour has on young people and ensure it is promptly addressed with those involved in a supportive manner.

Staff work very hard to manage the behaviour of a very difficult and challenging group of young people. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and say the rules are fair. Staff praise and reward young people for good behaviour. They will talk and listen to young people and try to understand what the problem is. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour by

getting involved in restorative work such as writing letters of apology. Sanctions are infrequently used. When sanctions are used young people are given the opportunity to have their punishment reduced by correcting their mistakes. Staff are good at using positive relationships to manage challenging behaviour and disagreements, and will only use physical restraint as a last resort. Where restraint has been used it has been used professionally to prevent young people putting themselves and others at serious risk.

Young people live in a physically safe and secure environment. They are suitably protected by a range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out routine health and safety checks to ensure the premises are safe and secure. Young people and staff are regularly involved in fire drills to ensure they know how to safely evacuate the building in the event of a fire.

There have been no new staff recruited to the home since the last inspection. All staff are appropriately recruited and undergo suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure they are suitable to work with young people. Visitors to the home are vetted and monitored to ensure young people are not exposed to people who may present a risk to them in their home.

Leadership and management

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

The manager has positively addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure a culture of positive behaviour is promoted. There is greater emphasis on rewarding good behaviour which has led to some improvements in behaviour, particularly in the home.

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the aims and objectives and services the home provides. It informs professionals about how care is provided at the home. There is a very detailed children's guide to the statement which provides young people with information about the home and the local community.

The manager is registered with Ofsted and is suitably qualified, experienced and competent to manage the home. Management of the home is complimented by the skills of two assistant managers who enthusiastically promote positive outcomes for young people. Young people benefit from care delivered by a well-managed, stable and consistent staff team with a broad range of skills and experience amongst its members. Staff are trained in a variety of safety and childcare subjects to enable them to meet the needs of the young people in their care. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They confirm they receive good support from the management team who are always available to offer advice, guidance and support.

The manager understands the home's strengths and areas for development. Team development plans are used to effectively plan the future performance of the home. Plans are complimented by good monitoring and overview by the provider and the

manager. They regularly evaluate the administration systems, quality of care and how the home is operating, including the areas which need to develop. Suitable action is taken to address any identified shortfalls. This ensures standards at the home continue to improve. There is some evidence that the views and opinions of young people, their families and placing authorities are gathered and used to inform the day-to-day running of the home. However, these views are not reflected in the regulation 34 reports that are submitted to Ofsted bi-annually.

Young people's case file records and other written documentation are of a good standard. They are regularly updated to ensure they provide an accurate reflection of young people's needs, their individual development and the progress they are making. They are confidentially and securely stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them usable by staff and accessible to young people.

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.