

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040633
Inspection date	11/10/2012
Inspector	Jennie Christopher
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	05/03/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

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 is a six-bedded home which is owned and managed by a local authority. The service is registered for no more than five children. The home may accommodate children with emotional and /or behavioural difficulties.

Children have access to play and art therapy which occur off site. Children attend school but can be educated within the home which has a space dedicated for use as a classroom or for homework.

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**.

Staff have extremely high aspirations for the young people in their care. They flourish as a result and outcomes for young people are outstanding. Effective relationships with parents, carers, education, mental health professionals and when required, other specialist services, ensures a comprehensive approach to placement planning. Young people are enthusiastic about their experience of living in the home and progress as a result of support from the committed and compassionate staff team. They are positive about their relationships with staff and feel supported to overcome barriers, no matter how difficult they might be. Young people feel listened to and that staff are concerned for their well-being. Young people benefit from consistent boundaries in a therapeutic environment. A social worker described the care young people receive as 'absolutely fabulous'. Young people are actively involved in consultation and service development through house meetings and individual work. Staff are continually seeking ways to improve the living experience for young people while bringing the group together to feel part of the home.

The effective home management and senior team guide the enthusiastic staff group, who are well trained and supported and young people benefit as a result. The management and senior team are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the home and service, and continually strive for improvement. Decisions made at senior management level, however, have resulted in the home breaching its conditions of

registration. The Registered Manager is in consultation with senior managers to ensure this does not happen again in the future. Requirements raised from this inspection include improvements to recording of sanctions and restraints and specifying an age range for young people accommodated in the Statement of Purpose.

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
2000	ensure that there is compliance with the home's conditions of registration, with specific regard to the number of young people accommodated (Care Standards Act 2000, Section 24)	30/11/2012
4 (2001)	ensure the Statement of Purpose contains the age-range of children that accommodation should be provided for (Regulation 4 & Schedule 1(8)(a))	30/11/2012
17B (2001)	ensure that the volumes for sanctions and restraints records contain all matters listed in 17B (3) for restraint and sanctions and (4) for restraints (Regulation 17B (3) and (4))	30/11/2012

Recommendations

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

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make excellent progress in all aspects of their lives. The thoughtful and individualised care they benefit from enables them to have improved confidence, self-esteem and have a positive understanding of who they are and their personal history. Young people contribute to the home's 'coat of arms'. This promotes a sense of belonging. When they leave, the piece they take with them, along with their memory book continues to build a sense of their history. Each young person is respected, valued and cared for as an individual and staff's unconditional positive regard aids strong attachments. Young people learn to develop confidence and as a result are more able to sustain appropriate relationships with friends, family and in future placements. Promotion of health and well-being, including keeping their bodies safe, ensures young people are able to understand their risk taking

behaviours and work positively towards reducing them. All young people's health and well-being needs are addressed with close consultation with medical and mental health professionals, ensuring better understanding of healthy lifestyles. As a result, young people have been supported to reduce the use of behaviour modifying medication, to try and enjoy healthier foods and access smoking cessation.

Attendance in education is excellent and young people progress and achieve in line with their peers. Those who struggle in mainstream education are supported with creative in house and specialist education packages. Certificates for small achievements ensure young people remain motivated and enthusiastic about education. Young people have strong relationships in the local community through youth clubs and activities such as swimming and trampolining. The young people have enjoyed raising funds for a children's charity through activities such as cake sales and they also have extremely positive relationships with neighbours.

While using the service young people develop a range of practical skills for independent living such as self-care and making snacks. When moving onto foster care or other placements, young people are thoroughly supported to prepare for the transitions to make them as stress free as is possible.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy constructive and rewarding relationships with staff who are clearly concerned for all aspects of their welfare. Young people say they 'like' staff and they consistently say that they enjoy living in the home. Young people were enthusiastic to show the home and their rooms. One young person thought the home is good because 'we get milkshakes!' Their enjoyment in living in the home is reflected in the friendly atmosphere and respect for each other's space and belongings. A social worker suggested that the young person 'has put roots down and it really is home.' Young people's certificates, trophies and medals for varying achievements are on display, alongside photographs of holidays and days out, continuing a theme of celebration and joint living. Listening to and letting young people express themselves is entrenched in the ethos of the service. Young people are routinely consulted on areas for improvement through house meetings and individual work sessions. Young people are actively involved in their reviews and care planning, producing their own summaries of progress and future goals in creative documents. They are supported to understand when their wishes cannot be acted upon and provided with the skills to manage this. Young people know how to make complaints, but said they have had no reason to, as they can go to staff with any issues. Information on how to access a range of independent support services is clearly displayed and there are excellent anti-bullying procedures in place. However, young people say they do not feel it is an issue.

Staff consistently have high aspirations for young people and strive to continually meet young people's needs. High quality care plans ensure that evolving needs are met, through regular reviews. The changing needs of young people are continually

monitored and plans updated by staff in consultation, where appropriate, with parents, social workers and other professionals. Cultural identity is explored to a great extent throughout the home through celebrations and displays for all cultural events. Currently a display for Halloween shows how young people have researched the meaning and cultural significance of the celebration.

Staff support young people's educational placements with robust communication between the home and schools, including supporting phased transitions to new placements. Young people who are on reduced timetables are supported with educational activities during school hours, with rewards, such as using the computer, when their tasks are complete.

Young people generally enjoy good health with monitored reduced use of prescribed medication. Mental and emotional health specialists work closely with the home to ensure consistency of approach and to support young people's emotional well-being. Close joint working ensures staff have 24 hour access to a named mental health professional to support the needs of young people. Medication is stored appropriately and there is a thorough system to ensure safety when administering. In case of emergency, there are several qualified first aiders on site at all times.

The spacious, well-maintained building has homely living and safety in mind. There are many areas for young people to spend time in groups or alone, including soft play and computer rooms. The vegetable patch provides young people with a sense of where food originates from and the development of horticultural skills.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe and that staff keep them safe. All of them are confident they have someone they can go to if they are worried or concerned. Young people's welfare is actively promoted and staff protect them from abuse or harm. Staff are confident in processes to follow should they be concerned for a young person's safety or welfare and are aware local child protection procedures. Young people missing from care has reduced significantly. Staff are aware what to do should this happen and what the likely triggers to cause this are. Close links with mental health professionals and the police further protect young people with individual robust approaches to being missing and other risk taking behaviour, such as self-harm. Through recording of such incidents and gaining young people's views, enables staff to have a better understanding of when a young person is feeling vulnerable and the triggers that might lead to risk taking behaviour. Individual files contain up-to-date photographs and descriptions of young people in case of emergency. The organisation's recruitment policy is thorough and ensures young people are protected from harm by robust personnel checks.

Highly individualised behaviour plans promote and reward positive behaviour through small rewards and treats. Sanctions are appropriate and proportionate with young people encouraged to reflect on their behaviour and consider how responses could

be different. Creative approaches to reparation have included a young person completing a charity bike ride to 'pay back' to the community. Robust and creative plans ensure that young people rarely require restraint. However, both the sanctions and restraints records do not include all the relevant information.

Young people are safe from fire and other hazards as a result of thorough checks and procedures. Robust and individualised risk assessments ensure young people are able to enjoy age appropriate activities and take controlled risk. Where there is specific identified risky behaviours, the therapeutic, multi-agency approach to risk management ensures young people can explore their emotions, in as risk free way as possible.

Leadership and management

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

The provider meets the aims and objectives that are set out in the Statement of Purpose and staff fully understand the functions and ethos of the home. However, the Statement of Purpose does not include the age range of young people that the home caters for. The young people's guide is thorough, easy to understand and can be personalised.

The committed management and senior team effectively run the home. The structure demonstrates clear accountability, and staff know who to approach with any concerns. Young people benefit from being cared for by the consistent and enthusiastic staff team who are positive about their roles and enjoy their work. The staff team receive high quality and comprehensive training with needs identified in yearly appraisals. Staff receive quality and evaluative supervision and lapses in performance are challenged rigorously, both at the time and formally. Staff meetings are used to share practice and consider how care can be improved as well as considering their own and each other's impact on the young people. While this can be a difficult process, it is seen as valuable by both staff and managers.

The home demonstrates robust multi-agency working to improve outcomes for young people. The management team actively source external support such as mental health professionals and close police involvement to ensure the best possible care and outcomes for young people. Positive relationships in the immediate community are maintained through close consultation and keeping neighbours informed of any impending changes to the service. There have been no complaints to the home for several years as a result.

The management and senior team have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home through extremely effective and detailed monthly monitoring of the building and records. Evaluation of these includes the impact any serious incidents have on young people and how areas can be improved for them. Six monthly evaluations are thorough and demonstrate spikes in risk taking behaviours, but also the reductions once specialist support interventions are in place. The manager uses questionnaires to actively seek the views of young people, their families and other stakeholders to improve the service wherever possible.

Direction from senior managers has meant the home breached its conditions of registration for a week in relation to the number of young people accommodated. The management team, while aware of the breach, failed to inform Ofsted at the time. They are working with senior managers to ensure this does not happen again in the 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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.