

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040642
Inspection date	03/11/2011
Inspector	Angus Mackay
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	04/02/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is owned and managed by a local authority. It provides accommodation for seven young people, with emotional and behavioural difficulties, between the ages of 14 and 18 years.

The home provides individually tailored care plans to support and help prepare young people for moving on to semi/independent living. This is enhanced through the provision of a semi-independence flat which supports transitional plans for young people moving on.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **outstanding**.

Young people receive outstanding care and protection from harm in the home. They express the highest confidence in the manager and staff who are highly thought of by social workers and other professionals. The home is excellent at transition planning with the young people preparing them for their next move. Young people are actively engaged in the running of the home being encouraged to engage in staff recruitment, choice and preparation of food, décor and all aspects of their own care.

Staff do not use physical interventions to control extreme behaviours preferring to work on positive engagements with young people and getting them to accept responsibility for their behaviours. Young people say that the approach works and they learn to respect others and accept responsibility for their own actions. They rarely go missing from the home and staff encourage them to negotiate absence or extensions to time out. Staff use positive encouragement with young people, with a strong focus on successes and achievements. Managers ensure that equality and diversity is embedded in the practice of the home and aids in the provision of highly personalised care to young people. Young people experience significant success in education and in progression to work or college. Social workers say that the home is unparalleled in its success at positive progression for young people.

Managers and staff are exceptionally good at providing support to young people when they are in conflict with social workers, school or other agencies. Some support is provided through mentors and by direct support of the young person at their request. One social worker said that, 'the home had supported a young person in a difficult and sensitive matter which had been very difficult but had probably helped make the placement the success it had been.'

The extremely experienced and well-qualified management team provide excellent, clear and effective leadership and long term planning to the home. They have a

demonstrable commitment to continuous improvement. They maintain a safe and generally secure physical environment for young people. The rear of the building where young people gather and garden equipment is stored can be accessed directly from the main road and is a potential safety hazard. Young people have aided in keeping the home well decorated but high areas have proved to be unsafe to paint and have subsequently not been completed. Staff ensure that all young people are knowledgeable about fire evacuation procedures but not everyone has taken part in a fire drill.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- maintain the overall well decorated environment by decorating the stairwell (NMS 10.3)
- practice the emergency escape plan with all young people (NMS 10.9)
- restrict access to the rear of the home to avoid excessive risk to young people. (NMS 10.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people love living in the home, fully understand its purpose and say that they have benefitted immensely from being there. Social workers describe the home and staff as being of a very high standard, being absolutely brilliant to work with and absolutely fantastic at communication. Ex-residents say that the home completely changed their lives around and helped them address many complex issues in their lives.

Staff assist all young people in attending school, college, work or in constructing a daily programme or schedule with them. All current young people are attending or are about to commence attending external courses or work. Young people achieve significant success at school and college and staff support them into work or further education. Social workers comment very positively on the excellent work done with young people previously unable or unwilling to take part in education. One social worker saying, 'the young person was helped to complete a course for the first time in his life and has built on this enabling him to attend college.' Another commenting, 'they are brilliant at supporting young people into education, getting them there, attending all meetings and preparing them for these. They work to an extremely high standard over and above the level you could expect.' Young people are proud of their achievements showing certificates gained in recent examinations and talking passionately about their future plans.

Staff are excellent at assisting young people to gain the skills needed to live independently. They actively involve young people in contributing to their pathway plans and provide them with countless opportunities to make choices. A social said of one young person, 'she feels very passionate about her involvement in the home and in making choices and decisions there, she feels that her voice is heard. She has really flourished there.' Staff encourage young people to build the networks of friends and activities to support them when they leave. They are excellent at aiding young people in maintaining family contacts, when these are possible.

Staff are excellent at providing highly personalised care which incorporates the young person's views and opinions. Care plans are detailed well maintained and have a strong focus on the young person's identity including their cultural and religious background. Staff use all situations in the home to broaden young people's knowledge of the diverse backgrounds of others and to challenge negative attitudes and cultural stereotyping. Young people develop self-care and life skills in a structured way preparing them for a supported move on. Staff aid young people in gaining accommodation and support in line with their personal needs when they leave. One social worker said, 'they are very good at risk managing to safeguard the young person but also extend their boundaries.' Many young people are supported for significant periods after leaving the home ensuring their long term success.

Young people show tremendous improvements in all aspects of health whilst in the home. Young people learn about healthy eating but also about the challenges to maintain this on a budget. Social workers comment on how excellent the staff are at addressing emotional and mental health issues with the young people. Staff aid young people in learning how to access health care and ensure that they attend all appointments.

The manager maintains excellent contact with young people who have left the home. Some young people are employed as mentors and continue to be involved with the home. One young person said that her 'current position and employment was completely down to her time in the home.' Young people who have moved on continue to receive assistance from the home and keep them informed of their current progress which includes university education and a range of successful employment.

Quality of care

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

Young people engage extremely positively with staff expressing confidence in them and enjoying their company. The quality of care received by young people is outstanding. During the inspection the home was in a period of minor disruption described by one young person as 'a regular cycle when new young people come into the home. Young people said that the influence of those already in the home would gradually influence the others,' it is positive peer pressure.'

Young people describe how they are consulted about everything in the house and how they feel valued and in control of what occurs, being offered choice in everything. They stressed how consistent staff are and frequently talked about the respect which they receive from staff. Young people say that the systems really work and make them respect others. Staff maintain clear risk assessments on young people which seek to expand their control over their own care. Where possible, young people self-administer medication and are encouraged to take responsibility for organising health appointments. Social workers say that staff are excellent at supporting young people in improving their health care and supporting them with mental health issues. Staff will attend all meetings including mental health sessions with young people, if they request that support. Young people gave examples of remarkable changes to their lives brought about by this support.

Staff encourage young people to form positive relationships outside the home and to engage in community based activities which they can continue after they leave the home. Young people understand the purpose of the home and say the focus is on giving them the skills necessary to make the next move. Young people have clear pathway plans which they are fully involved in constructing. They are encouraged to comment on their individual care plans and in some cases they have written whole sections of them. Many examples of young people commenting on and changing written records, incident reports and looked after child review reports were observed during the inspection. Young people explained how they can influence things in the home including the décor, their rooms, staffing, food and activities. One young person expressed annoyance when others did not fully engage in the young people's meeting, 'it is important, it is where we make our choices'.

Care plans contain information on individual differences in young people and guidance on how they wish these to be met. Staff provide young people with assistance in meeting their religious and cultural needs seeking support from families and other professionals where necessary. Staff provide young people with constant education, in their interactions, about valuing other cultures and eradicating negative stereotyping. Staff were observed using all situations to increase young people's understanding and respect for others. All young people and staff ate together and were pleasant polite and respectful to one another. Chores were shared and a gradual engagement of the new residents was observed throughout. Staff skilfully engaged young people in conversations and generated enthusiasm for activities, particularly with the new residents.

Staff involve young people in choosing furniture, fittings and colours for the home. Staff encourage young people to decorate and maintain the fabric of the building with them; with due regard to all health and safety issues. Most of the home is bright well decorated and homely. Young people and staff say that the manager tries to make it homely for their benefit. Young people gather fresh vegetables and fruit in season from the garden, which helps them with a clearer understanding of variety in diet and healthy eating. Staff and young people have been unable to decorate areas such as the stairwell, which impacts on the overall well-maintained décor of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Measures to ensure the safety of young people living in the home are outstanding. Young people say that they feel safe in the home and that staff support them and do their best for them. One young person expressed amazement at how forgiving staff were of her terrible behaviour. She said 'staff get you to focus on the future not what you did in the past.' All young people said that staff are approachable and that they feel confident talking to any of them. One young person commented that 'the new residents would eventually settle because of the work the staff do with them.'

Managers stress that they have a highly personalised approach to the work which does not rely upon set rules. Staff treat young people as individuals and have detailed care plans which they constantly update. Managers encourage staff to seek appropriate sanctions for individual misbehaviour rather than relying on fixed sanctions. Staff make these sanctions appropriate to the behaviour and seek ways for the young person to learn from the situation. This approach has led to a reduction in damage to the home and greater engagement of the young people in the respect agenda.

Staff work closely with young people and other professionals to reduce the incidences of young people going missing. Young people are encouraged to negotiate and arrange time out of the home as part of their preparation for independence. Staff involve police and staff from the local authority drugs team in working with young people to reduce their risk of drug taking and going missing to do this. Some of the established young people have made significant progress in breaking from high risk lifestyles.

Managers train staff in the use of physical interventions but they do not use these techniques. Staff ensure that young people receive the consequences of their behaviour in ways which will apply when they are living independently. For example this may require replacement of damaged items or police intervention and criminal charges. Staff say that 'young people may be restrained in their school but are able to adapt to the different approach in the home.' 'They behave differently here and do not repeat the behaviours which require restraint to be used. We are promoting independence, giving them skills to manage behaviour.' One young person said, 'Staff do not restrain you here they make consequences for any behaviour like in real life, so if you assaulted someone you would be arrested. Home is here to prepare us for independence and it does.' Young people say that there is no bullying in the home and that staff intervene constantly to keep them safe. Staff do not use physical interventions but detailed incident reports are maintained. Young people use these to comment on the resolution of incidents and their part in any incident, these record all information that is required in national minimum standards.

Managers have superb systems for recruiting appropriate staff. Young people say that they interview new staff and take this responsibility very seriously. They feel

genuinely listened to in this process and enjoy doing it. Staff say that they feel that since the young people chose them they actually want them there. Managers apply all recommended safeguarding actions in recruitment and appointment to ensure young people's safety is maintained. Staff are excellently trained and receive ongoing training and guidance in child protection and safeguarding of young people. Managers ensure that supervision is regular, educative and supportive. Training is comprehensive and managers support staff in career development and skills enhancement to improve the service to young people. A psychotherapist from the local children and adolescent mental health trust attends one staff meeting each month. Staff say that this allows them to improve their already excellent communication with one another and to help them express emotions engendered by the work with the young people. Staff believe this work aids them in remaining positive with one another and with the young people they work with.

Managers seek to provide a balance in staff teams to meet the care needs of young people. There is a good diversity in the staff team. Managers say that they seek a good balance in skills and experience when constructing rotas rather than focussing on gender. Staff are sensitive to gender differences and seek the young person's preference when talking about sensitive personal or health matters. Staff say that it is important that they are knowledgeable about every young person's background and culture and about teaching them about other cultures and addressing negative attitudes and prejudice.

Young people benefit from having two staff on sleep in to provide a safe night time environment. Young people returning late are welcomed back into the home where staff apply appropriate boundaries whilst remaining sensitive to their needs. Detailed risk assessments are maintained on young people and the environment to ensure their safety. The garden is well-maintained but is not isolated from the main road with a fence or gate to improve security for young people.

Leadership and management

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

Children live in a home where they are actively engaged in the decision making and their interests are central to all proceedings. They are fortunate to have the service excellently managed by a highly experienced, exceptionally dedicated and well-qualified manager, appropriately supported by an equally able deputy. Young people, past residents, staff and professionals working with the service hold the managers in high esteem. Staff say the direction and motivation for their work comes from the manager and describe her as 'top notch', 'the best', 'approachable', and 'knowledgeable'.

Young people are able to involve themselves fully in the respect ethos of the home because they are looked after by staff who are well trained, receive highly effective structured supervision and are appropriately qualified. Staffing levels are always sufficient to meet the diverse needs of the young people. Managers apply a highly structured system of delegation to engage staff, improving their motivation, skills

and the direct service to young people. Young people say that they like the staff, who show them appropriate respect and always seek their views.

Staff are clear that managers have high expectations of their interactions with young people and maintain rigorous monitoring of their performance. Managers and staff engage in work appraisals which incorporate colleague's views, these are being modified to incorporate young people's feedback. Managers set targets based around the core ethos of the home with a strong focus on respecting individual identity and challenging inequality and discrimination. Staff were observed throughout the inspection picking up generalisations or discriminatory comments and discussing these with young people.

The manager maintains a comprehensive range of monitors which she uses to engage staff in actively checking they are meeting the stated aims of the home. There is an excellent flow of information through the organisation. The manager incorporates this information from the young people, staff and data collection, into the development plan. Social workers say that young people feel genuinely listened to and are enthusiastic about their role in the service.

Staff maintain a safe environment for young people and ensure that all health and safety measures are appropriately addressed. They hold regular fire drills which are appropriately recorded. Not all young people have taken part in fire drills, although they are all aware of the procedure to evacuate the building.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.