

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC045408
Inspection date	25/05/2011
Inspector	Angus Mackay
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	16/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This children's home is for two young people aged 12 to 18 and sets out to offer high quality care in a stable and safe environment. The aim is to achieve this by providing an ambience where interpersonal relationships are based on mutual respect and understanding. Most young people have planned admissions but the home does accept crisis placements.

The home offers a flexible range of living experiences that are sensitive to individual needs and acknowledge age, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and national and ethnic origin. Young people are actively supported in attending education.

Two young people currently live in the home.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people are provided with intensive support to make good progress during their placement. The staff team are committed to providing an environment which facilitates the young people's growth, maturation, self-respect, acceptance of responsibility and development of age appropriate skills and behaviour. This is within the context of the need to provide young people with positive adult role models, guidance and boundaries and achieve within a manner that respects their rights, individuality and dignity.

Staff work exceptionally well with other professionals and with young people's families. This close collaborative work aids in the progress young people make in addressing their presenting issues, such as in their health, social and educational needs. Young people are making excellent progress at school, which is enhanced by this close collaborative working. Staff recognise and address the particular care and cultural needs of the young people aiding them in developing a positive self view. Staff provide young people with opportunities to develop independence skills and take controlled risks appropriate to their age and level of understanding. They are encouraged and supported in addressing all health issues in such a way that engages them in decision making and aids their personal development. Staff and young people benefit from a stable committed management team who provide good support and excellent access to training. The staff team is unified, confident and well balanced in age, gender, race and experience providing good role models for the young people. Young people feel engaged in the running of the home and in decision making, such as, through involvement on recruitment panels. This aids the sense of personal self-image and contributes to the overall benefit of the home.

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
31 (2001)	ensure that staff working in the home are provided with sleeping accommodation (Regulation 31 (10)b)	23/09/2011

Outcomes for children and young people

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

A social worker described the home as 'exceptional', being very effective with the young person and with other young people whom she had placed there. Social workers described the home as being very proactive in dealing with issues relating to the young people and their families. Young people have made significant progress with a range of presenting problems whilst resident in the home. One social worker stated 'their progress in all areas is definitely in part down to the home. Staff work closely with young people and their families to aid the young people in forming an understanding of their background and how to develop a positive self view.

Young people have made significant progress in reducing absence from care. A social worker said that the home is very good at protecting young people, will look for them when missing, will pick them up and are non-judgemental of them when they return. Whilst in the home young people are aided by the skilled staff team to settle, mature and reduce occasions where they go missing. They will inform the home of where they are and will accept advice on staying safe.

Staff work closely with health professionals to ensure good outcomes for young people in psychological, emotional and physical health. Young people have access to a children and adolescent mental health worker who offers regular sessions to both young people and staff. Young people have ongoing discussions about health issues with staff in the home who ensure referral on to appropriate services to ensure appropriate treatment is received. Files evidence appointments being met ensuring that young people receive the appropriate health care. Staff benefit in their work with young people from advice received from the relevant health professionals. Staff actively address issues of gender, cultural background and all aspects of personal identity when supporting young people in accessing health services. This support from staff ensures that young people can comfortably engage with health professionals where previously they were reluctant to do so. Young people demonstrate progress in their awareness of their own health needs including healthy eating, personal hygiene and self-awareness. Review minutes and keyworker sessions show that detailed work on young people's health engages them positively in the process and aids their move to independent decision making.

Staff insist that young people must attend education sessions and provide them with excellent support to enable this to happen. Young people benefit from this approach and all attend school. Young people's files show evidence of staff pursuing missing information, a social worker described them as very tenacious. The young people are proud of their engagement and achievement at school. The schools describe the staff as being very helpful and supportive of the young people and doing everything they can to ensure the young people can take part positively in their school programme. Both young people are making excellent progress from their starting points. Teachers recognise that the assistance from the home has greatly aided the young people in their progress. Both schools praised the engagement of staff and said that they have been exceptionally good with nothing negative to comment on. Teachers say that staff are willing to provide assistance in any way the schools require, to the benefit of the young people. Staff support in education is outstanding and young people benefit significantly from this.

Staff provide young people with assistance in following interests in the community, to aid their development of friendships, developing their self worth and having fun. Staff have negotiated free time for young people in risk assessed activities which allow young people to follow interests or develop positive friendships or family links. Young people have benefitted greatly from this with improved stability, positive self image and performance being linked by social workers and teachers to this development of trust. As well as, horse riding, fishing, singing, dancing and other organised activities young people are encouraged to play games in the adjacent play park, providing normal positive experiences for young people to aid in their personal development.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy and benefit from positive relationships with staff. The staff team, which is well balanced in gender and ethnicity and able to meet their individual cultural and care needs, enhances the care of young people. The high staff to young person ratio allows for very personalised care programmes to be implemented which ensure all aspects of the young persons cultural background and personal identity are addressed 'we are not an institution' one member of staff said. There were many examples of very individual care provided to young people allowing them to explore their own identity in a safe environment. Young people say that they have two key workers each but they are confident to talk to any of the staff and get appropriate support from them in addressing their concerns. Young people say they like the staff and feel confident in the support they provide.

Staff encourage young people to engage in a range of leisure activities designed to promote confidence, skill and purposeful use of leisure time. They provide opportunities for young people to have controlled incremental unsupervised time to develop independence skills as well as relaxed time with staff to discuss personal issues. Staff are conscious of the particular needs and emotional profiles of the young people and engage in an appropriate way to allow young people to benefit positively from these experiences. Social workers reflect that staff make significant progress with developing the young people's confidence and safety in the community with this negotiated positive use of leisure time.

Young people in the home understand its purpose and function, and work closely with staff to plan their future and prepare for the move on in a positive way to avoid feelings of rejection. Young people are aware of their care and placement plans and say staff discuss these with them and that they can contribute to them making them feel involved in planning their own future. Social workers confirm that staff aid young people in contributing to meetings and ensure that their views are taken seriously. One social worker says that this involvement of the young person has contributed significantly to planning future moves. Children are given the opportunity to see what is written about them in their files to further engage them in determining their care and placement plans. Due to the limited space in the home staff take young people out for keyworker sessions to ensure privacy and a relaxed environment for them to safely share in. The potential for young people's confidentiality to be breached is raised by this and the proposed development of the home is essential to minimise this.

Relationships between staff and young people are excellent and the home has a very relaxed ambience, which aids in the good care provided to young people, despite the lack of space. Mealtimes are a shared experience designed to encourage good relationships between everyone in the home, where everyone enjoys a relaxed healthy meal. Young people say that they choose what is on the menu changing this each week, which gives them a sense of control over their placement. Staff help young people to develop life skills by cooking meals with them allowing young people as much independence in this as they wish and can achieve success with. Young people are exceptionally proud of the skills they are developing with staff aid. Young people feel engaged in the planning of the home, which gives them a strong sense of belonging there and of their views being valued. Staff afford young people

opportunities to influence their own living spaces and staff in meeting their religious, cultural and social needs support their sense of personal identity.

Care staff give high priority to engaging young people in addressing their health needs, including their emotional and psychological needs, to ensure all these are being met. Staff are very sensitive to the personal preferences of the young people and support them in having these addressed to meet their personal or cultural requirements. Work with the young people and their families, is aided by input from the local children and adolescent mental health service. This has helped to address sensitive care issues, to the significant benefit of the young people, whilst also incorporating the input of parents. Staff have responded positively to a previous recommendation to ensure the safety of young people by managing the issuing of medication appropriately. Staff store medicines securely and have appropriate systems to ensure the safe issuing of medication to young people. Young people develop independence and personal responsibility as risk assessments are in place to facilitate them self-administering medication. During the inspection, no young people were self-administering medication. Staff engage in sensitive discussions about health interventions with young people and encouraging them to maintain healthy life styles. In food preferences, staff encourage young people to choose the main menu but ensure a balanced diet by including a wide range of healthy additions such as salad, vegetables and large quantities of fruit. The review minutes show young people's health improves whilst in the home.

Young people confirm that they know how to make complaints and that they are happy with the outcomes from complaints they have made. There were no complaints since the last inspection. Staff give young people a printed young person's guide to the home on admission, to familiarise them what the home offers and what to do if they are unhappy, to aid in keeping them safe. Staff have modified the young person's guide to include the Ofsted telephone number providing young people with an alternative support network and to comply with a recommendation from the last inspection.

The home is located opposite a housing estate and next to a playground, young people are encouraged to use these resources to aid their social development. Staff say that they enjoy positive relationships with the local community who respond very supportively to the young people in residence. Staff are actively engaged in discussion with local businesses to develop work opportunities for young people. Social workers and teachers at schools that young people attend enjoy excellent relationships which help them work together to address young people's needs. Other agencies such as the police are not actively involved in the home but enjoy a good working relationship with the home, which helps reduce community risks for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

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

Young people are supported to develop in a safe caring environment where staff encourage them to take carefully assessed risks to develop their aptitudes outside the home. Young people say that they feel safe in the home and understand that staff are trying to help them. Young people say that staff encourage them to show good behaviour and they enjoy their company. Staff work with young people to safely expand their boundaries and provide them with risk assessed time by themselves to aid their sense of feeling safe away from supervision. Young people are aware of what to do if they feel unsafe and are confident that staff will support them. Staff are trained in safeguarding and are knowledgeable about signs of abuse in young people, this aids in providing a safe environment for the young people and in early identification of any problems for the young people. Young people have twenty-four hour plans, which include identified risks for them and guidance to staff on actions to take to minimise the risks. Staff use the plans to enhance the safety of young people in the home and in the community.

The home has a written anti-bullying policy which includes a definition of bullying to aid staff's understanding of this and to meet a recommendation from the previous inspection. Young people say there is no bullying in the home but sometimes disagreements, which staff aid them in resolving. Staff complete identified risks of bullying on a personal basis on each child relating to areas where they may be subject to bullying, rather than a generic risk assessment, due to the small size of the home. Files show evidence of work conducted by staff at addressing bullying in school and the community for the young people. Social workers and teachers in the school confirm that the staff are very helpful in dealing with bullying in the school and have helped the young people to learn methods of coping with this, aiding their development and resilience.

Staff identify risks of going missing in young people and take appropriate action to record this and develop strategies to minimise its occurrence to keep young people safe. Staff will follow young people if they leave the home or look for them in known spots to seek their safe return to the home. Young people keep in touch with the home even when absent without permission and staff use these contacts to encourage their safe return. Staff impose no sanctions on young people returning from absence welcoming them back and checking for their safety to seek to re-engage them in the home. Police call to see young people on their return and staff ensure that this is a positive experience for the young people. Staff allow young people to settle back into the home before exploring the reasons for their absence to avoid disrupting their reintegration into the home. Staff have excellent relationships with the young people's families and can engage them positively in these situations to ensure young people are safe.

Staff inform the young people of their expectation of positive behaviour and model this in their interactions with young people and with one another. Staff use their knowledge of young people to minimise the use of restraint preferring to work through situations with them to aid the young people in resolving similar situations positively. Social workers confirm that young people in the home make considerable

progress in addressing difficult behaviours and the home are excellent at keeping them informed of any incidents. Schools say that the home maintains excellent lines of communication, informing them of any disruptions, which aids them in planning for their work with the young people. One school also commented that the home is excellent at passing messages from one shift to another to aid continuous care and education for the young people. Staff record instances of restraint appropriately and there is evidence of internal and external monitoring of this to safeguard the young people. Staff say that advice from the children and adolescent mental health service aids their work with young people and in identifying and ameliorating trigger points for disruptive behaviours linked to external stimuli. This information is included in daily plans to enhance the care provided to young people.

Children enjoy a clean safe environment, which has regular safety checks in line with regulations to ensure their well-being. Fire checks are up to date and all staff have recently completed fire safety training to enhance the safety of the home and to comply with a previous requirement. The frequency and recording of fire evacuations continue to meet regulations and provide a safe environment for young people. A very committed staff team maintains the home to a high standard but there is insufficient adequate and dedicated space for staff's sleeping arrangements or changing needs, which is potentially to the detriment of the care which they can provide. The local authority are addressing this issue.

A carefully selected staff group, who were subject to a rigorous recruitment process to ensure safe appointments, cares for the young people. The senior member of staff reported that he has addressed the gaps in previous recruitment processes, to meet the two requirements related to this made at the last inspection. This was not checked at this inspection. During the inspection, young people were involved in interviewing new staff. This enhances the prospects of safe appointments and young people's sense of engagement in the care planning process.

Staff provide a consistent and thorough approach to working with the young people which is enhanced by their maintaining good records and minimises disruption for the young people. Staff maintain comprehensive care plans on young people which they confirm they are actively engaged in creating giving them a sense of control over their life. Social workers state that the home is very proactive in attending reviews and getting young people to contribute to the planning process which aids their acceptance of the overall care plan. Staff encourage young people to maintain contacts with their families where this is possible and to their benefit. Young people's reactions to external contacts are dealt with positively by staff to help young people to deal effectively with the emotions they raise. Social workers interviewed stated that staff work very hard at developing relationships with families to aid the young people in their care. In addition to the care and placement plans each young person has a twenty four-hour plan which is designed to present all current information on all aspects of care, education and risk for that young person allowing a comprehensive and uniform approach to positively engage the young people. Keyworkers review these plans weekly and provide direction for anyone about how to work with each young person in a way, which successfully and appropriately addresses all of their needs.

Leadership and management

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

Staff and children are clear about the aims and objectives of the home and the services it offers. These match the details in the statement of purpose and function, which is readily available, detailed and subject to regular review, to ensure it accurately reflects the services available. The young people in the home benefit from this clarity and from the personalised service this details.

Young people and the staff team benefit from clear leadership and positive management supplied by the management team. The deputy manager has effective procedures in place for monitoring the conduct of the home including working on shifts to see practice and model good interventions. In addition to the deputy manager's monthly review of practice the local authority conducts monthly regulation 33 visits which the management team use to aid their development of the service to young people. Young people contribute to these reviews and positively aid the home's development plan. The registered manager shares regulation 33 and 34 reports with the staff team, in their weekly meeting, allowing them to contribute to the ongoing development of the home. These reports will be forwarded to Ofsted as required in new guidance to aid safe monitoring of the home for young people.

Young people and staff benefit from a comprehensive training and personal development package provided by the local authority. The local authority provides comprehensive training and all staff appointed in the last year have completed the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction training and are studying for a level 3 qualification. Staff state that training is excellent and gives them the necessary skills to provide good care to the young people. The young people have a dedicated stable and experienced staff team who receive appropriate and regular supervision to aid them in providing good quality care. Staff are sufficient in numbers and allow the home to provide good staffing levels at all times to enable them to meet the needs of the young people.

The registered manager provides staff with regular updates on current legislation and practice to ensure they are providing young people with an appropriate and contemporaneous service. All staff are aware of the new national minimum standards and engage in discussion with the registered manager on how to positively address these to the benefit of the young people. In addition to responding to national changes the local authority is reviewing all residential child care provisions to enhance and refine the service provided to young people. Staff are kept informed of progress with developments of the service and are confident of the future of their home due to the very specialised service it is successfully delivering to aid young people in crisis.

The registered manager, ensures that all significant events are appropriately recorded, reported to the relevant authorities and acted upon, thereby enhancing the safety of the young people. Comprehensive files on young people are securely stored in the office to ensure confidentiality for young people. Staff maintain and monitor these files appropriately ensuring they can provide an effective service to young people and contribute to their personal development. These records are of good quality and provide a clear picture of the young people's lives and areas for development.

The registered manager endeavours to respond positively to all recommendations and requirements plus staff requests to enable them to meet the needs of the young people. The local authority is working with the registered manager to provide better accommodation to meet regulations and to enable staff and young people to gain maximum benefit.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.