

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC047978
Inspection date	14/05/2013
Inspector	Amanda Ellis
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home, owned by a company, provides care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There is also a school on site where young people can access education if this is appropriate to their needs. The home is set within a 14-acre site which contains a small working farm, also owned by the company.

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 **adequate**.

The home provides a good quality of care delivered by a dedicated management and staff team. However, outcomes are sometimes compromised due to the complex needs of the young people and the impact of their negative behaviours. Social care professionals comment on how the management and staff team provide a consistent quality of care for young people.

Young people engage in risk-taking behaviours. However, safeguarding practices are clear and young people learn how to keep themselves safe. The home provides clear, individualised, well-planned care, taking into account the specific needs of young people. This means the home promotes improved outcomes for young people.

Young people are valued and develop within this home. They have positive views about their care, the staff and the home. They are able to express how they have benefited from the care and support at this home.

There are three breaches of regulation identified within this inspection. These relate to staff supervision and training, young people's case records and provision of independence planning for young people. However these do not have a significant negative impact on the welfare or safety of young people.

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
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which is kept up to date and is signed and dated by the author of each entry. (Regulation 28 (1) & Schedule 3)	01/07/2013
27 (2001)	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, supervision and appraisal. With particular reference to ensuring all staff have up to date child protection training and supervision (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	01/07/2013
11 (2001)	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to make proper provision for the care, education and supervision of children accommodated there, with specific regard to the provision of independence planning for young people. (Regulation 11(1) (b))	01/07/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people in this home learn to develop a more positive self-view, emotional resilience and understanding of their background. This means young people develop positive attachments and relationships with carers. Young people benefit from consistency of care and clear boundaries. This means, over time, their behaviour generally becomes more positive and productive.

Young people make satisfactory progress in education in relation to their starting points. Attendance is supported and consistent. Young people engage with education within the home's own school. Where young people have had disrupted educational histories, individualised packages of education are developed to encourage their participation. This includes educational provision which is compatible with their interests and preferences. Some young people progress in education and are able to experience training options. Staff support young people in completing applications and developing new skills and confidence in order to secure employment. This means that they are able to develop confidence and explore their potential.

Young people receive health care appropriate to their individual needs. Their health needs are met by staff working alongside a range of health care professionals. However health outcomes are potentially limited, due to young people engaging in

behaviours such as frequent smoking and alleged drug use. While some young people are reluctant to engage in their own healthcare, they do benefit from the advice, guidance and support provided by staff. This means young people are up to date with their medical appointments and are able to access services to address their specific health needs.

Young people benefit from appropriate contact with their families and other people significant to them. The staff team collaborate with professionals and families and promote positive contact for young people in line with the arrangements agreed in their individual care plans.

The development of independence is encouraged according to the age and ability of the young people. They learn to take some responsibility for cleaning their bedrooms, managing their laundry, and helping with tidying the home. Independence skills form part of the daily routine of the home. However there is a lack of formal planning and assessment of young people's needs. This potentially limits young people's development of appropriate self-care and independence skills in readiness for moving placements and eventually leaving care.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive a good quality of care at the home. Staff are committed and enthusiastic in their work. They demonstrate consistent concern with the welfare, education and progress of young people. Staff provide a nurturing environment in which young people can develop. Young people make positive progress because of their effective relationships with staff. Young people enthusiastically express that they feel valued and well cared for.

The participation of young people in the running of the home is a routine element of its functioning. For example, young people attend weekly house meetings and can offer their suggestions in a 'suggestions book'. Their wishes and feelings are taken into account in the running of the home. Therefore, this builds their confidence and increases their participation in their own care.

Young people receive a children's guide which contains information on their care, advocacy, and the details of people they can contact if they wish to raise a concern. They understand what to expect from the care they receive and how to make a complaint. They have their own telephone to make private calls. This ensures they are able to express any concerns they may have independently of the staff team.

Care planning, risk assessments and behaviour management plans are detailed and individualised. These documents provide staff with the clarity to effectively support young people. Young people benefit from consistent care because their care planning is clear and comprehensive.

Young people receive care which meets their social, emotional and psychological

health needs. Staff work with a wide range of professionals who confirm that staff are proactive in safeguarding young people, supporting them to meet their health and educational needs and encouraging their positive behaviours. A professional said of the staff team: 'I am impressed with the degree of effort, commitment and thought that goes into caring for the young people. They are a very proactive team.'

The arrangements in place for the management of medication are safe and effective. Records of medication stocks are correct and administration of medication is well recorded. Staff are trained in first aid and the safe administration of medication. This means the arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Young people engage with a range of leisure and sporting activities. Staff participate in activities and also support young people to pursue independent hobbies. Staffing levels ensure young people have effective support to enjoy a wide variety of new experiences. This means young people benefit from exploring their potential through engaging with social and recreational activities.

The maintenance and the décor of the home is of an acceptable standard, with a plan of improvement in place. The home is comfortable and provides a homely environment. Young people's bedrooms are individualised and they have a choice in their decoration. The home has its own small-holding with livestock and vegetable gardens. Young people benefit from this provision. The home offers opportunities for both privacy and social engagement.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report that they generally feel safe in the home and outside of it. They can talk to staff about any worries they may have. They also have access to independent advocates who visit when required. This provides an additional measure to promote their safety.

Safeguarding strategies focus on robust risk assessment. Staffing levels are appropriate to ensure that all young people are supervised, kept safe and receive appropriate support. Young people benefit from having individual risk assessments. These are reviewed regularly ensuring young people are protected from harm as far as possible.

Young people do go missing from the home, however staff are proactive in working with all safeguarding agencies. One professional stated, 'I am happy with the way "missing from care" is managed in the home. They provide monitoring, surveillance and support. This is not something I see often enough.' The home has agreed protocols and procedures to follow should young people go missing, which are implemented appropriately. Staff are aware of triggers which lead to young people going missing. They work with young people to address these issues upon their return to the home and in key work sessions. Risks are minimised through staff awareness of factors which lead to young people going missing.

Staff implement behaviour plans to promote improved behaviours. Incentives are used to reward positive behaviours. This means that young people have the opportunity to learn how to modify negative behaviours and develop more productive ways of behaving. Young people are encouraged to use free time positively, therefore diverting them from risk-taking activities and associates. Young people learn to improve their interaction with staff and each other because of effective behaviour management practices.

Physical interventions are used as a last resort when a young person is placing themselves or others at risk. Staff who undertake restraints are suitably trained, and equipped with the skills to de-escalate situations to avoid the need for physical intervention. The recording of such incidents is in line with regulatory requirements. Staff promote positive behaviour for young people at all times. Young people learn to manage their behaviours and develop more positive ways of coping.

Staff employed to work in the home experience a rigorous selection process prior to taking up their positions. There have been no newly recruited staff members since the last inspection. The staff team are stable, which means young people receive care delivered by familiar staff, who they know and trust.

Young people say bullying is not currently an issue but they know what to do if an incident occurs. Good policies and procedures are in place for countering bullying and a range of resources support proactive discussions around bullying. As a result young people are protected from bullying. There have been no allegations or reported incidents of bullying within the home since the last inspection.

The home has a range of risk assessments for the building, activities and equipment. Hazards are identified and clear methods of control are in place to reduce risk. Fire drills are held and fire alarm systems are checked as required. All required health and safety checks are carried out in a timely manner. As a result the building is safe, appropriately secure and young people are protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

The Registered Manager is an experienced and dedicated professional who has significant direct experience in working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home was judged as making good progress at the previous interim inspection, when no shortfalls were identified.

The home has a development plan in place which contains pragmatic proposals for continued improvement to raise the quality of care provided. The development plan is a working document and regularly reviewed. The manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and takes action to tackle weakness and make improvements. The manager has identified that additional designated time to undertake managerial tasks are necessary to develop the home and make

improvements.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose and children's guide which inform young people, their families, and placing authorities about the services provided by the home. The Statement of Purpose reflects the home's conditions of registration.

The provider ensures that required external quality assurance checks are conducted on a monthly basis to monitor the quality of care. A report on these visits is sent regularly to Ofsted. These reports are effective and have identified a number of shortfalls in the standard of care and monitoring of the home. The Registered Manager has internal monitoring systems in place to monitor and improve the quality of care. These systems provide effective monitoring.

Staff feel well supported and are well supported. Staff supervision takes place on a monthly basis. There have been occasions when not all staff have had up to date formal supervision. However, staff report that they feel fully supported to meet the needs of the young people and that the manager offers continual support and guidance. Shortfalls in supervision have not impacted negatively on young people.

Staff meetings are used effectively as a forum for staff to develop strategies to meet young people's evolving care needs. The management team ensure a reliable presence, providing support on shifts and an on-call service. Staffing levels provide consistent levels of support which meet the needs of the home and the young people in placement.

Staff participate in a training programme which is relevant to the young people's needs. This enhances staff knowledge and understanding and increases the quality of work with young people. There have been shortfalls in some staff receiving up to date mandatory training, for example in child protection. However this has not had a negative impact on the quality of care delivered to young people.

Health and safety checks, such as fire equipment testing, take place regularly and are recorded. As a result, young people live in a safe environment. The arrangements for managing the risk of fire are effective. Regular fire drills ensure all young people know how to evacuate the home.

Young people's records are generally good. They are clear and stored securely. This ensures that young people's records contribute to an understanding of their lives. However, some records are not dated or signed by the author of each written entry, making it difficult to see when they next need to be reviewed.

The Registered Manager has systems in place to notify relevant agencies, including Ofsted, of significant events to ensure the multi-agency protection of young people. Notifications are made as required and appropriate action is taken following the incident to protect 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.