

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC051513
Inspection date	01/08/2012
Inspector	Judith Longden
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is run by a local authority and provides care for four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities.

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 an adequate quality of care with individual plans for each young person. Young people are adequately involved in their care and the running of the home. The care promotes improved outcomes for young people in most areas, especially in relation to leisure activities, contact and preparation for independence. Young people are generally positive about the care they receive and have good relationships with most staff. Young people are safe and feel safe. The home has strong safeguarding procedures and policies. The manager understands the strengths and areas for development and has a development plan in place to improve the service. There are two breaches of regulation and three failures to meet national minimum standards. These relate to provision of a varied menu, the updating of the Statement of Purpose, the fairness of sanctions, the entries in young people's records and the consistency in behaviour management. However, these do not significantly impact negatively 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
5	shall keep under review and, where appropriate, revise the	30/08/2012

(2001)	Statement of Purpose (Regulation 5 (a))	
13 (2001)	ensure children accommodated in the home are provided with food which is sufficiently varied. (Regulation 13 (1)(a)(iv))	30/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff understand and apply at all time the home's written policy on managing behaviour (NMS 3.3)
- ensure sanctions and rewards for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair and are understood by all staff and children (NMS 3.8)
- ensure entries in records are legible, clearly expressed, non-stigmatising and distinguish as far as possible between fact, opinion and third party information. (NMS 22.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make sound progress in achieving positive outcomes in most areas, particularly with regard to contact arrangements, use of leisure activities and independent living skills. This has resulted in increased confidence and self-esteem.

Young people generally enjoy good health. Staff work very hard to help young people understand the risks associated with smoking and alcohol. Issues are discussed in key work sessions and house meetings. However, young people continue to take risks with their smoking, though this is reducing. Young people are advised regarding a healthy diet but the home's menu is not sufficiently varied to support the promotion of a balanced and varied diet. Young people often make their own medical appointments and have confidence to attend for medical attention on their own. This means young people are taking some responsibility for their own health.

Young people enjoy a wide range of activities that provide new and challenging experiences. The home provides activities and games such as computer use, a gardening project and board games. In addition a community art project attends the home to encourage young people to express themselves through art. Young people also make good use of community facilities such as youth club and cadets. As a result young people develop new skills and grow in confidence.

Young people are improving their attendance and attainment in education and some young people are achieving to a high standard. All young people are in some form of education with education programmes tailored to their needs. Young people are proud to show their records of achievement and portfolios which results in improved

confidence and self-esteem. This means young people are achieving positive outcomes in their education.

Young people benefit from improved contact with their parents, family and friends. Arrangements are set out in the young person's plan and staff facilitate and support contact as required. Where arrangements are changed young people are supported to understand the reasons for the changes and manage their feelings. A social worker said 'the home has worked hard to maintain contact for the young person with their family'. Young people are encouraged to make and sustain friendships with their peers and staff welcome friends to share activities and mealtimes.

Young people acquire good practical and life skills to support their independence. Young people identify the skills they already have and those they need support with. They identify the tasks they could do to achieve these skills. Staff support them to understand money management and help them develop important social skills such as maintaining appropriate social networks and engaging with professionals. Young people learn practical skills such as shopping, cooking, changing light bulbs, and laundry. Young people are encouraged to help around the home with some young people assisting in spring cleaning and others helping with general maintenance in the home and garden. This means young people acquire skills and receive care to help them prepare for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from sound care management procedures. The individual needs of young people are identified and residential plans specify the aims of the placement and how the home will achieve these. Daily routines are devised as a result of these plans. Young people have some involvement in their plans and attend their reviews. This means the day-to-day care of the young people reflects the individual requirements of their placement plan. Young people are aware of how to complain and are kept informed of action taken to address their complaint. This means they are aware their issues are taken seriously.

The home has good policies and procedures in place for the admission of young people into the home ensuring young people are made to feel welcome when arriving at the home. Young people who move to new placements are involved in their move and kept informed of plans.

Young people participate in house meetings where they discuss issues and share ideas. They make good use of key work sessions and say they can share their views at any time. As a result young people have some influence on their care and how the home operates.

Young people generally have good relationships with staff and each other. One young person nominated a member of staff for the national 'carer of the year award' and attended an awards ceremony in London. However, young people say some staff

are inconsistent in how they relate to them and how they manage situations. Young people's individual behaviour management plans are not consistently applied and as a result positive behaviour is not always promoted.

Young people's health needs are identified and actions are in place to meet these needs. Young people have access to a range of health professionals and staff support them to attend all appointments. This means they receive the services and support they need to meet their health needs. Staff are trained in the safe administration of medication. Written records of medication are clear and accurate. All staff are first aid trained. This means the arrangements for dealing with medication are safe and effective.

Staff encourage young people to take part in a wide range of leisure activities. These include activities in the home, use of facilities in the community, trips to theme parks and holidays. The home has an extensive games room providing a variety of activities such as snooker and games consoles. As a result young people are engaged in a range of enjoyable activities.

The home effectively supports the learning and development of young people. Staff promote attendance at school and support young people with their homework. Young people have access to computers and quiet areas to study. A social worker said the home 'liaised well with education' and supported the young person in choosing their educational options. As a result, young people are supported to achieve their educational potential.

Young people live in a home that is safe and also provides a homely environment. Young people have ample areas where they can socialise and space to be on their own. Young people have keys to their room and lockable facilities in their rooms. This ensures their privacy and security for their possessions. The home is close to local amenities and leisure facilities providing a range of opportunities for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

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.

Young people say they generally feel safe in the home and the community and are able to talk to staff if they need to. However, they feel staff do not always deal with behaviour and incidents in a fair and consistent manner. They say sanctions are not discussed with them on a regular basis and as a result some young people are able to negotiate alternative consequences whilst others are not. This means sanctions are not reasonable, fair or understood by all young people. Staff are trained in restraint and strategies to de-escalate incidents. As a result there has been no restraint since

the last inspection.

Young people benefit from extensive individual risk assessments which are reviewed and updated regularly ensuring young people are protected from harm. A social worker said the home employed 'proportionate risk taking enabling a young person to enjoy more freedom but remain safe'. They went on to say in terms of risk management the home 'is excellent'.

The home has sound policies and procedures for safeguarding practices in respect of child protection, handling allegations and recruitment. Staff are trained in safeguarding and are clear on their role in the safeguarding process. Young people are protected from unsuitable people gaining employment by a sound recruitment process. Visitors to the home are asked to sign in and identification is checked. This further ensures young people are protected from significant harm.

Young people are protected if they are absent from the home. The home has very good protocols and procedures to follow for absence and missing episodes and these are implemented as appropriate. Staff understand the distinction between young people absent and those who are to be reported as missing. Staff are aware of triggers to absence and work with young people to address these in key work sessions. Young people who are absent are responded to positively when they return. Staff discuss their absence and the risks associated with leaving the home. They ensure they are well and not hurt. Staff engage with other agencies to carry out formal return interviews as required. This means young people who are absent or missing are protected as far as possible.

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 and appropriately secure and young people are protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

The home has addressed the recommendation made at the previous inspection and young people now comment on any restraint or sanctions. However, the young people comment that sanctions are not always fair and as a result a recommendation is made in this respect. Two further recommendations are made as a result of this inspection in relation to ensuring behaviour management is consistently applied and ensuring records are completed appropriately. Two requirements are made relating to provision of a varied menu and the updating of the home's Statement of Purpose. However, these shortfalls do not significantly impact negatively on the welfare or safety of young people.

Staff are clear about the objectives of the home and provide a service for young people in line with the home's Statement of Purpose. Although the Statement of

Purpose is regularly reviewed it contains errors with telephone contact numbers and addresses. This means full and accurate information is not available to parents and placing authorities. The home provides each young person with a welcome guide which details the service offered. This ensures young people are clear about the care and service provided.

The home has sound procedures for monitoring the quality of the service provided and the welfare of the young people. The registered provider undertakes visits to the home in accordance with regulations and carries out checks to ensure the welfare of young people is monitored. The registered provider consults with young people to identify any areas for development to improve the quality of care provided. The manager monitors records kept by the home to identify any concerns, patterns or trends. However, entries in records are not always clear with some conflicting recordings in various log books relating to an incident. In addition the wording of records is not always expressed in a non-stigmatising manner. Records are stored securely and information sharing is in accordance with data protection. All significant events relating to the protection of young people in the home are notified to the appropriate agencies and actions taken as required. As a result the safety and welfare of young people is adequately monitored.

The service is managed and staffed by suitable personnel who are well qualified and have a range of skills and experiences. The staff rota ensures young people's needs are met through the provision of sufficient staffing. Staff receive an induction into the home and continue to develop their skills and knowledge through the provision of a range of training. Staff identify their training needs in their annual appraisal and this is reviewed at every supervision. Staff benefit from good, regular supervision and team meetings. As a result staff feel supported to continue to provide a quality service for 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.