

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC055153
Inspection date	14/11/2013
Inspector	Stephen Trainor
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	29/10/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service is owned by a private organisation. It provides activity-based intervention for young people who are experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis. Up to three individual placements for young people are provided. Placements are usually short term and are activity based.

A planned yet flexible programme designed to meet a young person's individual needs and circumstances is agreed with placing authorities. Young people are cared for at various locations around the United Kingdom in accommodation that includes bunkhouses, youth hostels, campsites, narrow boat and an ocean-going yacht.

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**.

Young people receive an adequate overall standard of care and education and this helps them to learn how to develop skills suited to building positive futures. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour and learn how to make sensible decisions that keep them safe. Boundaries and daily routines are effective for the young people and as a result, current placements are stable.

The service continues to respond to individual's presenting needs, to resolve conflict positively and to safeguard concerns quickly. The staff implement agreed strategies and protocols consistently to reduce risk taking behaviours. Individual support plans are well thought out and the staff positively engage with young people to look at their behaviours. Some successes are noted with young people who have good school attendance and make measurable progress. Young people show that they are self-motivated to achieve the best from their placement experience.

The services' management remains child focussed. Staff and young people enjoy good relationships. Young people show that they can develop trusting relationships with the different adults looking after them and this enhances their progress. Since the previous inspection there has been some staff turnover. A decision to restrict

placements being offered ensures that the remaining staff are not stretched too thinly. Recruitment of staff is on-going. The staff remain committed to providing the best possible experiences to secure positive outcomes for young people.

There is a positive relationship established with police missing from care coordinators in the different areas the mobile service operates. Some safeguarding concerns prevail especially when young people are missing from care. Risk-taking behaviours are reviewed frequently ensuring placement and behaviour management plans remain up to date.

The promotion of young people's health and well-being is managed well through consistent staff practice. Contact arrangements are coordinated well. Meetings and reviews are frequently convened to discuss individuals' arrangements. Individuals are clear about their placement arrangements, being aware of plans and programmes. Young people's views are being listened to. Positive views have been expressed by partners about the quality of support being provided.

There is a system in place to monitor practice as well as the service's operation and management. Reports are not always being forwarded to Ofsted in line with regulations. This inspection repeats a requirement set at the last inspection to forward internal monitoring reports in accordance with Regulation 34 at six monthly intervals. External monitoring reports undertaken in accordance with Regulations provide suitable analysis of information and include children's views. This allows weaknesses to be tackled and strengths to be built upon. The service has a development plan that supports improvement. The support provided for staff with regard to annual appraisals and training attended is not being made as clear as it could be in the service's records.

The service reports serious concerns transparently. In line with the conditions of the service the Registered Manager appraises Ofsted of the location of each base that is being used..

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
34 (2001)	ensure the internal monitoring of the service takes place at appropriate intervals with copies of reports sent to Ofsted at correct intervals (Regulation 34 (1a) (2))	20/12/2013
34 (2001)	ensure internal monitoring enables the provider to identify any trends and issues of concern so that all those involved in running and working at the home can continually improve the	20/12/2013

	quality of care being provided. Reports to be completed at six monthly intervals and a copy of each report to be sent to HMCI within twenty eight days of completion. (Volume 3 Section 3.14)	
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the overall number, competence and deployment of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose; specifically, ensure vacant posts are filled (NMS 17.1)
- ensure training attended records show good quality learning and development programmes are provided, mandatory training is completed and refresher training provided at the correct frequency (NMS 18.1)
- ensure management records show that all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually and appraisal takes into account any views of children the service is providing for (NMS 19.6)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed; specifically, ensure each setting being used by the responsible organisation has suitable mandatory guidance in place as well as general health and safety information, past inspection reports, and risk assessments to support staff in carrying out there duties. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people experience stable placements and make good progress in many areas, including in their social presentation, self-awareness and taking responsibility for their behaviour. Young people confirm that they are very happy living at the mobile service and consider themselves to have made significant progress. They single out the many positive experiences gained when living on the organisations canal narrow boat.

Young people grow in confidence and recognise that the experience of living at the mobile service helps to change their lives. This is clearly evident in keeping young people safe. Young people engage well with staff and start to build social resilience and life skills straight from the start of their placements. This is as a result of the good quality care and high levels of emotional support they receive.

Young people have a clear understanding of their plans and arrangements and are capable of making responsible decisions. They achieve personal goals and this helps them to develop a better understanding and appreciation of their personal

circumstances. Young people can motivate themselves, especially to attend meetings where they express their views with some confidence.

Young people living at the service are treated fairly and staff practice supports their individual needs. There is a good level of mutual respect between young people and staff. There are occasions when young people do challenge boundaries but hard work has led to a clear reduction in risk-taking behaviours. The staff continue to review behaviour management strategies to ensure they remain fully suited and incidents reduce in frequency.

Young people show willingness to participate with their individual education arrangements and this has resulted in improved levels of attendance and attainment. Young people are allowed to work at a pace suited to their personal circumstances. Many of the young people have not had positive experiences with their schooling in the past. The flexible approach adopted by the mobile service supports young people in achieving education targets as their confidence builds. Young people presently using the mobile service remain enthusiastic about their education arrangements and make measurable progress.

Young people enjoy good health and mostly choose to adopt healthy lifestyles. They take responsibility for their health and make clear links between diet and exercise. Regular activities ensure they remain physically active. All young people are familiar with their health arrangements, are aware of the contents of their health plans and attend their appointments with health professionals. The staff encourage engagement with mental health professionals when the need is identified.

Quality of care

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

Young people usually enjoy good relationships with staff which helps them to engage more positively and learn how to make better choices. The staff are skilled and show good insight and understanding of young people's needs. As a result, young people grow to appreciate, and value, the efforts of staff and learn how to work closer with them in planning their futures. The different locations where young people stay are kept to a satisfactory level. Wherever they are, young people have their own bedroom, which can be personalised to suit their taste.

The staff act upon care plans and offer support to young people, this positively influences their behaviour. Individual plans are of a good quality, reflecting young peoples' needs and charting their progress. Staff practice supports young people to maximise their contributions when attending their statutory reviews where many partners are in attendance. Plans ensure young people have many opportunities to develop and practice skills to help them to resolve conflict positively.

Social workers receive frequent progress updates. All achievements are celebrated and this continuously builds young peoples' self-esteem. Young people receive rewards for their efforts. Some creative ways of working and use of incentives help

focus young people in their placements. The staff take a pro-active approach to keeping young people safe, as well as ensuring young people have the skills and knowledge to take responsibility for their behaviour in line with their age and development.

Partnership arrangements work well and communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is clear. This results in good coordinated support when young people are most in need. Consistent practice reduces any potential confusion in arrangements for the young people. Young people receive clear support, instruction and updates to help them manage any anxieties they might have. This is particularly relevant at the start of a placement. Rules and routines are clearly outlined.

The staff 'champion' many areas of work including education. Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the mobile service philosophy of care. Care staff continuously emphasise the importance of young people gaining the best education and the use of creative approaches encourage attendance and achievements. Young people's participation in their programmes allows them to gain certificates of personal competence. This helps them gain useful independence skills as well as plan for their next placement.

Young people understand how to make a complaint. They confirm that complaints, if made, would be responded to in full. A written guide covers complaints, with information, guidance and contact details of agencies such as Ofsted, children's rights and the Children's Rights Director. Young people can differentiate between 'grumbles' and serious complaints. No complaints had been made between inspections.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted to ensure young people can make informed decisions on how they can keep themselves safe and understand the impact that illegal substances, smoking and alcohol can have on their well-being. Medication is stored safely, and records are maintained on the administration of medication. There are clear policies and procedural guidance and these are followed in practice. The staff receive suitable training to support health and well-being and this maintains the quality of care being provided.

The staff engage young people in activities to develop individual potential and enhance learning opportunities. A suitable recreation budget is provided. Activity planners are completed weekly. Young people's engagement in interesting pastimes and hobbies remains central to staff practice to reduce boredom and incidents of them going missing from care.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm that they feel safe living at the mobile service. This was particularly relevant to young people visited on the canal narrow boat. Young people

showed that they had learnt to accept responsibility for their behaviour and understand how they contribute to the mobile service operation. Young people develop skills that help them to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. Young people do progress at different rates but with staff perseverance all are achieving and developing. The young people visited confirmed that they are happy.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue of concern to them and confirm that the staff do not tolerate any form of bullying. They have confidence that staff will respond to any bullying that may occur. There is sensible discussion around difference, allowing service users to maintain a positive self-view. Young people understand the many forms that bullying can take and are equally clear about what to do if they have any concerns.

Well-coordinated safeguarding work supports young people in making choices on how to lead their lives. The staff receive regular training to update their knowledge and have a good understanding of safeguarding policies, procedures and actions they should take when an incident arises. This allows young people to live in safe and friendly environments. Young people have suitable safeguarding information and have learnt to make safer decisions about who they spend their time with. Policy and procedural guidance is consistent with that of the local safeguarding teams protocols. Relationships are established with the safeguarding Local Area Designated Officer. There have been no safeguarding concerns between inspections.

Systems for dealing with young people who go missing from care are well established and a protocol is set out. Risk assessments take account of a young person's potential to go missing. Reports made to local police are in line with the established protocol. Management attend meetings with the local police forces' missing from care coordinators to review matters affecting the service. Management review each incident. Young people have the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in and this helps them to change behaviours. Effective safeguarding practice is consistently demonstrated when responding to children who go missing without permission. The service has a policy that reports young people to Ofsted following a prolonged period of absence.

There are no concerns relating to how the service manages the young people's behaviour. There are challenges and these are recorded and reported to appropriate authorities and Ofsted. Young people respond well to praise, although the number of sanctions recorded are relatively high. The staff are clear that physical intervention is very much a last resort. All staff receive regular and refresher training in positive handling techniques. Records are held on interventions. Recruitment practice is robust, ensuring only suitable people work with young people. Equally good practice ensures the effective vetting of visitors to safeguard young people.

Health and safety issues are managed well, ensuring young people and staff remain safe. Regular servicing of equipment and routine safety checks maintain a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the case of an emergency and can exit the different mobile settings safely. The emergency evacuation procedures for

the canal narrow boat are explained clearly. The staff implement a range of risk assessments to identify and minimise hazards. The inspection highlighted that adequate health and safety documentation were not kept in the different mobile settings. It was possible to access further information at the responsible organisations' headquarters.

Leadership and management

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

The service is managed by an experienced manager who is registered with Ofsted. The manager is undertaking a Level 5 diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care. The responsible organisation took the decision to restrict the number of placements provided by the mobile service from three to two following some staff movement. Recruitment to vacant positions is on-going. The Registered Manager is confident that the remaining staff team members can still meet the specific needs of each individual currently placed. The Registered Manager informs Ofsted of the location of each base that is being used.

The manager is child focused and has a clear vision of how the service should develop and progress. Young people benefit from living in a service that is flexible and designed to meet their needs. It gives them a period of time away from their previous lifestyle. The staff team work well together, are child centred and understand their role and responsibilities. Young people's behaviours can create some challenges and this can impact negatively on routines, the service's operation and management. The manager is working hard to ensure the staff team delivers good quality practice consistently. The staff are responsive to the specific needs and specific circumstances affecting young people and their families. The management team reflect on their practice and the service's operation. The views of the young people, staff, parents, social workers and independent reviewing officers are being captured and these support continuous improvement.

Records maintained show satisfactory clarity in how the staff are managed and they confirm that supervision is taking place. There is access to training but the overview record shows that all staff have not completed mandatory and refresher training at the correct frequency. The systems for staff's personal development and appraisals are established but not all staff have their performance formally appraised at least annually. Young people do not contribute to the staff appraisal process and this can restrict staff from improving their knowledge, enhancing their skill sets and working practices. Permanent staff have either completed, or are undertaking appropriate professional qualifications.

Comments are being captured from staff and young people within reports produced following visits to the service under the requirements of Regulation 33. There is some evaluation of records and events and this is helping to develop the service. Reports highlight issues and concerns in a matter of fact way providing clear data on the service's present status. The actions being taken to address concerns and shortfalls are outlined. The full impact and value that living at this service has had on

young peoples' lives is clear within these records.

Both internal and external monitoring of the service is taking place. Reports are not always sent to Ofsted at the required frequency in line with regulatory requirement. Whilst it appears that internal monitoring by the manager is being completed monthly, no monitoring reports had been received by Ofsted. This was also a requirement set at the last inspection.

The management team have a suitable system in place to ensure notifications of significant events are reported. Seven notifications were reported in total. No complaints were investigated by Ofsted between inspections. A complaint by a neighbour about noise was responded to appropriately by the Registered Manager.

Staff practice is supported by written guidance, policies and procedures. The different bases used do not always hold adequate records to support both Regulation 33 monitoring and Ofsted inspections. The majority of the records are maintained at the responsible organisation's headquarters. The services' statement of purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The ethos and culture established fulfils the services' aims and objectives, and allows young people to build resilience against the many challenges they face as they work towards securing a brighter 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.