

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061005
Inspection date	11/09/2013
Inspector	Angela Whiteley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	24/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

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.

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is owned by a local authority and provides accommodation for up to eight young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

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 **good**.

Young people receive good quality care in a safe and supportive environment, which promotes their welfare. Those new in placement, make good progress from their starting point across all aspects of their welfare and development, particularly in terms of education, health, behaviour and self-esteem. Young people admitted in emergencies are supported to settle quickly and are fully informed about the home. However, initial review meetings for emergency admissions are not consistently taking place within the required time.

A highly motivated and stable staff team are well managed and guided in their tasks. Their stability provides young people with improved opportunities for strong relationships to develop. A placing social worker has commented that young people have 'good relationships with various members of staff at the home.'

Young people say they feel listened to. They regularly express views and wishes and see results, which are central to the smooth running of the home and are actively involved in planning processes. Most young people have personalised care plans, individual behaviour management plans and clear risk assessments, which are reviewed regularly ensuring the diverse needs of young people are thoroughly considered. However, not all documents have been signed and some are missing from young peoples' files. Staff are proactive in chasing missing documents and requesting meetings where a change in the care plan is needed. This ensures young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plans and have opportunity to fully understand and contribute to their reviews.

Effective policies and procedures underpin the knowledge and practice of staff in

ensuring that young people feel safe and protected from harm. They take appropriate action to implement safeguarding measures when required; for instance when young people go missing from home on a regular basis. This is effectively managed and associated risks minimised, but some young people do not return to the home quickly, which comprises their safety. Missing from home records show incidents have reduced in recent months. The home use electronic monitoring devices to ensure young people with complex health needs are safe. However, there is no agreed policy in place and the use of these measures is not included in individual placement plans or agreed by parents and placing authorities.

The Registered Manager and deputy manager acknowledge they need to implement a more robust approach to monitoring and oversight of the standard of care, to effectively secure improvement in practice. Some areas for development are identified in respect of, staff annual appraisals and staff training. Further inconsistencies in practice relate to the registered person not consistently notifying investigations and outcomes of child protection investigations to Ofsted. Also, staff are not consistently completing restraint and sanction records promptly since the implementation of a new electronic recording system. However, staff take appropriate action to ensure the safety and welfare of young people.

The breaches in regulation relate mainly to administrative procedures and systems and have minimal impact on the outcomes for young people, and do not adversely affect the quality of care provided.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that physical restraint and sanction records include all the required information, which is recorded within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline and is uploaded onto the electronic record promptly (Regulation 17B (3)(4))	23/10/2013
22 (2001)	ensure that the use of any electronic monitoring devices is provided for in individual placement plans and consent is agreed with the placing authority, parent and child. The measure should be no more restrictive than necessary, having regard to the child's need for privacy (Regulation 22 (1) (a-d))	23/10/2013
28 (2001)	ensure records for each child who is accommodated include the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3 of this regulation. Also ensure they are kept up to date and signed and dated by the author (Regulation 28 (1) (a-c))	23/10/2013

30 (2001)	notify without delay any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5. In particular, notify Ofsted of the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home. (Regulation 30 (1))	23/10/2013
--------------	---	------------

Recommendations

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

- ensure where electronic devices are used to monitor children, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used and how they promote the welfare of children (NMS 10.5)
- ensure a review is initiated no more than 72 hours after an emergency admission to consider whether the child should remain at the home (NMS 11.7)
- ensure that staff have access to appropriate training that keeps them up-to-date with professional, legal and practice developments, with particular regard to child sexual exploitation (NMS 18.1)
- ensure all staff have their performance individually and formally appraised at least annually. (NMS 19.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people feel safe in this home and say they are well cared for and respected. This helps them feel valued and increases their self-esteem and confidence. Young people who have been at the home only a short while settle quickly with high levels of support. They make good progress from their starting point across all aspects of their welfare and development.

Young people benefit from the support and encouragement of staff to lead a healthy lifestyle. They participate in regular exercise and have a varied healthy diet that they help to prepare and plan with staff. They benefit socially from attending community activities of their choice, which promotes self-esteem and confidence. They are registered with primary health care providers and have access to additional support services, such as therapists and specialist health professionals. They learn the importance of looking after themselves, which further increases confidence and self-esteem.

Independence is promoted well within the home. Individual independence programmes take account of young people's skills and abilities. They make positive progress and develop skills that help them become more self-sufficient and prepare them for adult life. Staff work individually with young people to help them

understand the impact their life experiences have on their behaviours. Young people develop positive coping strategies and new skills with the support of staff and other professionals, which helps them to manage crises and keeps them safe. The commitment and motivation of the staff, therapeutic support, the use of behaviour management plans and effective incentives help to strengthen young people's emotional resilience and psychological well-being.

Where appropriate, young people benefit from family contact. Staff support, supervise and facilitate direct and indirect contact, which helps to build and maintain positive relationships in a safe environment with those who are important to young people.

Most young people have appropriate education placements and are maintaining good attendance, making good progress from their starting point relative to their age and ability. Staff are persistent with young people, encouraging regular attendance at school and college, which helps fulfil their potential. Some young people receive rewards from school in recognition of good conduct and behaviour, for example a school trip abroad

Quality of care

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

Young people say they receive good quality care and they, 'get on ok' with staff. A placing social worker made comment, 'that staff communicate clearly with young people.' Young people are able to approach staff and hold open and honest discussions with them. They receive high levels of support from a consistent and experienced staff team that have a good understanding of young people's needs and abilities.

A consistent staff team provides more stability for young people and consequently improved opportunities for good relationships to develop. This enables staff to manage young people more effectively, which in turn has reduced the need for sanctions and restraints. However, staff express their frustration regarding young people who go missing from home and refuse to engage with them. They have limited opportunity to develop strong and trusting relationships, which assist in meeting young people's complex needs. They are not daunted by setbacks or failures and are relentless in their efforts to provide opportunities for young people to succeed.

Young people's views and opinions are listened to and are central to the planning and day-to-day running of the home. This enables them opportunity to make purposeful contributions. As a result, they feel valued, well informed and involved in all aspects of their care. Young people confirm they know how to make a complaint if they unhappy or have any concerns about their care.

Staff are proactive and consistent in supporting young people's education and activities helping them to achieve economic well-being. Strong partnership working

exists with health, education and social services, which means young people have access to a range of services and interventions that support and promote health and embrace diversity and culture, for example specialist epilepsy services and support to follow chosen religions.

Young people have individualised care packages, which are reviewed regularly. However, not all plans are available on young people's files, as placing authorities have not provided plans for some young people who have only recently been admitted. An initial review of an emergency placement was not held within the required timescale to determine the placement should continue, however a statutory review has since been held and the home is meeting the young person's needs. Staff are in regular contact with the placing authority to chase up missing documents and to request review meetings if a change in the care plan is needed.

Young people live in a large comfortable home. It is generally well decorated with modern furnishings and provides enough space for young people to have some privacy should they wish. Recent damage by a young person to the communal living areas and staircases is being addressed and damaged furnishings and furniture have been replaced. These actions help promote young peoples' self-esteem, welfare and safety.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people confirm they feel safe at this home and can talk to any member of staff if they are concerned about anything. They benefit from consistent boundaries provided by a staff team who are fully trained in all aspects of safeguarding. They are knowledgeable and confident in implementing the home's safeguarding policies and procedures and take a highly proactive approach. The manager maintains a visible presence at the home and regularly spends time alone with young people.

Staff recognise the particular vulnerabilities relating to the diverse needs of the young people in their care. Interventions are thoughtful and underpinned by clear individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans. This enables young people to take managed and considered risks in line with their preparation for living independently. For example, agreeing appropriate free-time with young people, that helps protect them, whilst developing respect and trust.

Some young people do not want to live at this home and go missing as a means of demonstrating this and do not always return quickly. However, the homes written records show these episodes have decreased over recent weeks. Although young people are at risk, the home acts in accordance with the local authority care plan, risk assessments and the legal status of the placement. Staff are in daily telephone contact with young people to encourage their safe return. Incidents are appropriately risk assessed with the relevant agencies and young people are returned home through the efforts of partnership working with the local police and missing from home coordinators. Staff are proactive in engaging with young people to identify

support services that can help to protect them.

The home has good local links with specialist agencies in respect of risk evaluation and support of young people. This helps to promote their safety and well-being. Agreed electronic monitoring is used to strengthen safety in relation to complex health needs. However, the home has no agreed policy in place and these measures are not included in individual placement plans. Although not opposed by the placing authority, this arrangement has not yet been formally agreed by them or with parents and the young person. This delay has no adverse impact on young people.

Staff are trained in the appropriate use of physical intervention but prefer the use of de-escalation techniques, which are more effective. The home's records show a reduction in restraints and sanctions recorded in the last six months. Positive behaviour is encouraged with clear and consistent boundaries to help young people understand the effects of their behaviour on themselves and others. As a result, young people learn appropriate boundaries and require minimal interventions. However, records are not consistently reviewed by the manager and are not fully completed and uploaded onto the new electronic recording system, within the time required. This delay means young people do not have a prompt clear account of incidents to raise any concerns and managers cannot appropriately monitor the records. The manager is addressing this shortfall through more robust monitoring and quality assurance systems.

The manager has a well-established recruitment and selection process, which ensures that young people are cared for by adults who are safe and competent. Visitors to the home are checked and supervised as appropriate to deter unsuitable people having access to vulnerable young people.

Young people enjoy a safe and secure environment. There are effective health and safety systems in place. Regular practice evacuations ensure young people know how to exit the building safely and quickly in case of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home benefits from an enthusiastic and appropriately qualified Registered Manager who is ably assisted by a competent and experienced deputy.

The home is well resourced with sufficient staff numbers, which ensures that young people's needs are met during their time at the home and they enjoy an environment, which is clean, homely and comfortable.

The staff team work well together providing a good mix of gender, culture and ethnicity that reflects the needs of the young people in placement. Staff are qualified, experienced and well supported through regular supervision, training and team meetings. They appreciate the approachability and informal support available from the management team.

Staff routinely undertake mandatory training including safeguarding, first aid and team teach. Opportunities are available for additional training in response to young people's emerging needs, such as epilepsy care. However, staff have not yet completed training on young people involved in sexual exploitation. Also, staff annual appraisals are overdue, which means professional development and practices are not well managed and monitored. The Registered Manager is aware of these shortfalls and is addressing them with urgency.

Young people benefit from the Registered Manager and staff liaising effectively with parents, professionals and agencies, which provides a consistent approach to their care.

Young people's records generally present a good overall picture of their experiences at the home. However, some young people's records are missing such as care plans, placement plans and personal education plans that are not signed or dated. This is primarily the responsibility of the placing authority and staff regularly chase these missing documents. However, the absence of this information hinders staff in supporting young people, particularly with education needs and does not give young people a full understanding of their care journey. Young people are encouraged and supported to contribute to their care plans and parents are actively involved in the process. This makes them relevant to the individual.

Monitoring and quality assurance systems are in place to ensure young people continue to enjoy a good standard of care. Managers and staff have high expectations for young people who achieve positive outcomes. They continue to strive for improvements in the service and fully understand the strengths and weaknesses of the home. However, Ofsted has not received notification of one investigation and one outcome of a child protection investigation, which does not meet requirements. This has had minimal impact on the outcomes for young people as procedures and policies are in place and implemented to ensure young people are safe. The Registered Manager responded promptly and positively to reaffirm her determination and commitment to improve provision for young people and intends to address these inconsistencies through a more robust monitoring system.

There were no outstanding requirements at the last inspection. Two of the recommendations raised are fully met, showing the service is committed to improving the provision. A third recommendation is not fully met and raised as a regulation to address a shortfall in practice with regard to recording restraints and sanctions.

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.