

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061232
Inspection date	01/08/2012
Inspector	Peter Harrell
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	17/01/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by the local authority. The purpose and function of the home is to return young people to their parental home or to foster placements.

The home is purpose-built and located on a large estate surrounded by similar style family homes.

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**.

The home provides an excellent level of care and outcomes for young people are good. Young people speak very positively about the care and support they receive. Relationships between staff and young people are positive and strong. The home is described by the young people as 'a growing unit, it is on its way to being perfect' and 'it's nice, the staff help me they are very kind'. Robust safeguarding policies and procedures are in place implemented by a well-trained group of staff who actively promote safety and young people's welfare.

Staff have been observed smoking in the presence of young people. Therefore this area of positive role modelling is not evident and, as a result, there could be negative health outcomes for young people, some of whom already smoke. There is a further shortfall in respect of the quota of care staff with a first aid qualification. The Registered Manager is aware of these areas and committed to improvement.

The staff team focus young people on their education and promote positive outcomes and reward consistent progress. Young people's achievements in education are positive and they are supported to access a variety of educational and extra curriculum provision. All young people are consistently working on their goals and their outcomes are impressive.

Internal and external management systems ensure that the home's performance is effectively monitored. Staff are supported by a qualified and experienced manager who is committed and motivated to improving the outcomes for young people living in the home. There is a strong commitment from a suitably qualified, experienced and vetted staff team that are highly committed to further improve outcomes for the young people and provide a high quality service.

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
20 (2001)	promote and protect the physical, emotional and mental health of the children accommodated in a children's home with reference to ensuring that staff do not smoke alongside young people. (Regulation 20 (1))	30/09/2012
20 (2001)	ensure at all times, at least one person on duty at the children's home has a suitable first aid qualification (Regulation 20 (2) (e)).	01/12/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure children understand their health needs, how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to make informed decisions about their health particularly in relation to smoking (NMS 6.2).

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from a high level of personalised care which helps improve their confidence and promotes all aspects of their individual and cultural identity. Staff are skilled at understanding ways in which young people express themselves. This ensures young people's emotional well-being is central to all aspects of care planning and intervention.

Measurable outcomes have been achieved in particular with regard to young people becoming more self-sufficient, develop independent living skills and being helped to

develop a positive view of themselves. Consultation with young people is regularly and actively sought. Young people demonstrate a wide range of choices and reports indicate young people participating and feeding back their views and feelings to their key workers with the regular use of questionnaires, residents meetings and keywork sessions. A young person said, 'we have meetings often. we can say what we want to do'. Being involved and consulted in the development of the home is viewed as important for the young people; additionally they all say they can raise any issues of concern formally and informally with members of staff.

Young people's educational needs are well supported. Staff ensure there is good communication with schools and colleges ensuring a holistic approach to education is maintained. Staff participate in young people's educational reviews and work closely with various educational placements. As a result of well-established routines, attendance and participation at education is very high. This has been achieved through the consistent messages and encouragement given by the staff and the Registered Manager. There are positive outcomes in relation to young people's learning, significant progress is being made by young people to attain their educational targets. A social worker commented about a young person who recently left the home that 'staff always tried really hard to make sure the education outcomes would be good despite a difficult ending'.

Staff were seen smoking in the presence of young people. By doing so, young people are not being provided with positive role models and this can impact negatively on any cessation programmes that are identified within their health plans, some young people continue to smoke tobacco which will detract from their physical and psychological health over time.

Young people eat a generally healthy diet and have access to a wide range of food, nutritional advice and exercise, which assists them to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The home provides young people with an environment where appropriate care is taken to arrange routine health appointments and keep records of illnesses, accidents, injuries and medication administered. Staff regularly take appropriate opportunities to talk about health issues with individual young people, such as the effects of drug or alcohol misuse, relationships, sexual health and healthy lifestyles, and supporting leaflets and information is readily available.

Young people are fully supported with contact visits and telephone calls and they benefit from the additional emotional support of staff at these times. This enables young people to maintain meaningful relationships with the significant people in their life.

Quality of care

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

One of the home's key strengths is the strong mutually respectful relationships which exist between young people and staff, this ensures young people make significant progress in many aspects of their lives. Young people benefit from living in a caring

and highly supportive environment which is described as 'very nurturing' by a childcare professional who provided feedback for this inspection. The composition of the staff team, being mixed in gender, experience and with ethnicity similar to the young people who are cared for, enhances their care. Young people benefit from positive reinforcement and active participation in a broad range of activities and experiences. Staff work hard to ensure that the needs and wishes of young people are met whilst carrying out their duties in a supportive and professional manner. Young people are very appreciative of this level of care and support provided and are positive regarding their overall experience of living at the home.

Young people benefit from a system of positive reinforcement and reward for good behaviour and active participation in a broad range of purposeful activities which in turn has increased their confidence. A young person said 'I enjoy it here, I have friends here, staff are lovely they give us lots of information and we get loads of support, I give it 10 out of 10'. Young people get on well in the company of staff. Relationships between staff and children are strong and based on a sound understanding of children's specific emotional and behavioural needs.

There are clear policies and procedures have been established for dealing with complaints. Young people are supported to raise any issues of concern. This was confirmed in discussion with them. Comprehensive records are maintained of all complaints. Since the last inspection, the home has received three complaints all of which were responded to and addressed without delay to ensure that positive outcomes are achieved for all involved and to ensure that young people's voices are heard.

Young people's needs are fully assessed. Comprehensive individualised placement plans are in place which detail the purpose of their care needs and targets regarding how these are to be met by staff. Young people's care, placement and education plans are routinely reviewed. Placement plans are constructed in a way that encourage children to contribute and influence the way the home is run. Young people actively attend their planning meetings and reviews with plans are subsequently updated to reflect their progress. Young people's statutory reviews are held at the recommended intervals. All of this ensures that the home can continue to meet the individual needs of young people are reflect their strengths and future aspirations as they go forward toward greater levels of independent living.

Young people are registered with and access various local healthcare services to obtain appropriate information, advice and support. Suitable records are maintained of healthcare appointments made and attended. Specialist intervention services are provided to meet the specific needs of some young people. Systems are in place for the safe storage, receipt, administration and disposal of unwanted medication for the protection of young people.

Staff actively promote the education of young people and support them to achieve their academic potential and celebrate their successes. Young people's educational programmes are tailored to meet their individual needs. Where necessary, staff will assist to transport young people to and from school as well as providing them with

the emotional support they require when at school and by attending all education review meetings. Staff encourage young people to undertake training and actively look for suitable work relevant to their skills and aspirations. Staff make attempts to obtain appropriate voluntary work experience and college courses. Staff ensure that young people have pathway and transition plans in place, which enables them to be fully supported to plan for their future move towards independence.

The home's design and location is suitable for its function and attempts are made to make it domestic in style with a good level of bright communal spaces. The home provides young people with excellent facilities in a warm, welcoming, homely, caring and relaxed environment, maintained to a high standard. It is well furnished, in good decorative order with improvements carried out since the last inspection, as well as plans in place for improved kitchen facilities. Young people are also provided with their own bedrooms with en suite facilities. They are given opportunities to make their bedrooms as personal and private as possible. Young people's bedroom doors are fitted with appropriate locks to promote the privacy and dignity of young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in an environment that is safe and keeps them safe from harm. Young people are protected by the use of clear risk assessments which are frequently reviewed. All the young people say that they feel safe and there are people they can talk to if they have any concerns. Social workers and child care professionals say the home feels safe and that it provides excellent care for young people. The staff are highly skilled, knowledgeable and up to date about safeguarding procedures and there is clear reference in documentation to the local safeguarding children's board. Additional training in safeguarding is available and taken up by staff at regular intervals. There are good systems in place to deal with welfare concerns. Incidents are appropriately referred to the relevant agencies. Consequently, children are well protected by these systems combined with the effective knowledge of staff.

Professionals outside the home are regular visitors and there is an up to date record of these visits and meetings. The manager is very knowledgeable regarding her role in reporting any incidents of concerns and when to report matters or seek advice from professionals outside the home. There has been one notification since the last inspection, this incident was dealt with promptly and managed appropriately.

Close circuit television surveillance is used for the safety of the young people to monitor visitors to the front door and the upstairs hallway. Since the last inspection its use has been reviewed, images are not recorded and visitors are made aware of the cameras. It is also referred to in the updated Statement of Purpose and the Children's guide.

Since the last inspection, there have been two incidents of young people going

missing. These incidents occurred over short periods of time and were responded to appropriately. Procedures are in place for young people who go missing, linked to young people's individual risk assessments and behaviour plans. These documents are reviewed and updated to reflect new protocols for working with young people who go missing. Records kept of these incidents are clear. The home has developed a good working relationship with the police and other agencies, which includes young people being 'flagged' due to their vulnerability and early reporting, together with good staff ratios this ensures a robust, consistent and protective response.

Challenging behaviour by young people is managed well. Staff and the Registered Manager are highly skilled at finding supportive strategies to manage some very complex behavioural issues. The home has an appropriate policy and procedure for the use of physical restraint which the records reflect is consistently applied in practice. There have been seven incidents of restraint since the last inspection, which were managed appropriately and young people's views were sought at the time and comprehensively recorded after each incident. None of the current young people currently in the home have stated that they have been restrained. Staff receive regular training updates on restraint and behaviour management. This ensures that young people are managed safely should any incidents take place.

There have been no new staff employed since the last inspection. Employment records show that the local authority has in place procedures to employ new staff, which should follow safer recruitment practices. Staff comment that they all have regular supervision, access to training and are supported in carrying out their work by managers who respond promptly to any issues they have regarding the day-to-day care provided to young people.

Young people are guided as to what they should do in the event of a fire at the home. Records confirm that the alarm systems are tested regularly and other procedures are in place to ensure maintenance of equipment and installations. Risk assessments are used to identify and reduce risks from hazards around the building, grounds and activities by young people. There is an ongoing plan in place of maintenance work.

Leadership and management

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

The home is staffed by a well-established and stable team, sufficient in number to meet young people's needs. A diverse range of experiences, gender and ethnicity are reflected in this team. The Registered Manager is experienced, has the appropriate qualifications and reflects upon ways to improve the service to young people. The staffing rota ensures that there are sufficient staff to deliver care and attend to administrative tasks. This ensures the young people can regularly meet with, and feel supported by adults working in the home.

Only half of the staff employed have a current first aid qualification which means that

there are times when there are no staff present at the home who are trained to administer basic yet essential medical treatment to young people in an emergency situation. The manager is aware of this shortfall.

Staff securely store young people's paper files. Records provide a clear and concise evaluation of a young person's progress. In particular the home operates a system that allows staff to record efficiently the progress and development of young people.

The requirements and recommendation from the last inspection have been fully met. There are sound management systems in place which are practical and communicated well among the staff team. Record keeping is clear with good recording systems in place. Systems are in place to monitor the performance of the home. The Regulation 33 visits happen as required and are often unannounced.

Staff are able to support young people in understanding and reflecting on their personal development from the start of their placement. This contributes to their positive self-view. Young people benefit from being cared for by staff members who are supported in their work through supervision, training opportunities and regular access to the Registered Manager and senior managers in the local authority who oversee the progress of the home.

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.