

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061678
Inspection date	20/07/2012
Inspector	Chris Scully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	15/03/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

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

The home provides care for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties aged from 12 to 17 years. The home is owned and managed by a limited 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 **good**.

The home is making a positive difference to young people's lives and provides them with excellent care and support to achieve good outcomes. Young people enjoy extremely warm, caring, trusting relationships with staff. This enables them to talk about any concerns or issues they may have and receive the right support and guidance. Consequently, young people are making good progress. Staff have a secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and missing from care procedures. This means that they are able to take swift, effective action to support young people and protect them from harm.

The home is well managed by an extremely committed Registered Manager and staff team. The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide provide clear insight into the type of care and support each young person can expect to receive. Most records and documentation are generally well maintained though there are some minor shortfalls with regards to the missing from care policy and some risk assessments. The home usually ensures the appropriate persons are notified of significant events. However, Ofsted was not notified of some strategy meetings. These shortfalls do not directly impact upon the care provided.

The home is well maintained and reflects the personalities of the young people. There has been an increase in signage around the home which impacts upon the homely environment created. Systems for monitoring the quality and standard of care provided in the home are sound and provide guidance as to the areas for further improvement.

All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised and tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each young person. This is supported by the innate understanding that staff have of each young person's diverse needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their family, schools and placing authorities. This ensures young people continue to receive the right help, guidance and support they need on a daily basis. Young people are doing well with regards to their education and have excellent opportunities to consider future learning and career paths. Young people feel empowered as they are able to put forward their views and wishes, such as requesting games consoles for the home. They feel at home here and refer to it being 'like a family,' and they know that staff genuinely care about them and want the very best for them.

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
30 (2001)	ensure that any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5, with particular reference to the instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home, is notified to the HMCI. (Regulation 30 (1) Schedule 5)	27/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home's missing from care procedure is compatible with the Runaway and Missing from Care protocols and is sufficiently detailed (NMS 5.6)
- ensure the care and support provided to young people minimises the risk that they will go missing. In particular, the missing from care risk assessments are sufficiently detailed (NMS 5.1)
- ensure signage around the home does not impact upon the homely environment or lead to an institutional feel (NMS 10.6)
- ensure there are systems in place to monitor the quality of record keeping. In particular, that young people's risk assessments are sufficiently detailed. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people have strong, trusting relationships with staff because they value their opinions and treat them as individuals. Young people say they are 'happy and settled here' and know staff are 'there for them.' Young people are making very good progress in developing emotional resilience as they grow in confidence and maturity. They are making significant improvement in their health and emotional development. They are growing in confidence and self-esteem. This enables them to make sense of the past, how this has influenced their lives and how they can now move forward.

Young people are developing an understanding of their own health care needs. They are generally fit and well and are confident to talk to staff if they are feeling unwell. Their overall fitness has greatly improved due to the creation of a gym at the home. Young people use this on regular basis with their peers and staff and think 'its cool'. They enjoy a very healthy and nutritious diet, which effectively takes into account their individual needs. This is enhanced by the range of produce grown in the garden. This includes potatoes, chillies, herbs and strawberries. Young people take an active role in maintaining the garden and preparing meals with their produce. They are very diplomatic when discussing who cooks the best meals and do not want to commit as to who in their opinion is not very good. Some young people are skilled cooks who enjoy baking especially chocolate cakes and staff comment that their recent cheesecake was 'divine.' These experiences have not only improved young people's views of leading healthier lifestyle, but have given them added responsibility, which they have thrived upon.

Young people make informed choices about their health as a result of the excellent guidance they receive from staff. Despite the advice they receive on the dangers of smoking and recreational drugs some young people choose to continue with some of these activities. However, they are very aware of the potential health issues related to these activities. Young people are aware of other health services in the community that they can access if they want to.

Young people are making good progress in their educational placements, with some making excellent progress. Young people's records of achievement are testament to the work they have put in during the last year. Consequently young people are extremely pleased to have been offered several placements from colleges and as apprentices. They are eagerly working through these to establish the best path for them to take. Most young people's attendance at school is good. Some have worked well with staff to improve upon their attendance, which enabled them to complete their course work. Young people are rightly proud of their academic achievements.

Young people have strong links with their families and other people who are important to them. They benefit from being able to sustain positive relationships with them through appropriate levels of contact. Staff work really hard to ensure that contact arrangements are organised so as to ensure the safety and well-being of the young people. Social workers say the home works very well with families and that 'staff show great commitment to the young people,' they work with. This means

young people are fully supported at all times.

Young people are being well prepared for adulthood. They are actively involved in the running and organisation of the home, for example, compiling shopping lists and going shopping with staff. Staff are very aware of some of the challenges some young people may face in the future and are actively working with them to support them. This means young people are able to develop independence skills, such as going to the shops alone safely. Young people are confident to manage their own finances and to undertake a range of household chores. Consequently, young people are developing a wide range of skills and experiences in preparation for their transition into adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive because they live in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment. They have a strong sense of belonging and say 'this is like family.' This is because staff are excellent at building positive relationships with them, consequently young people are able to resolve any problems in a constructive manner. This is echoed by social workers who comment upon, 'the sensitive and caring environment,' in which young people live. Young people feel valued because staff listen to them, value their opinions and respect them as individuals. Young people say 'staff are there for us and they always listen.'

Young people are very aware that staff may not always be able to act upon their requests. They are aware of the complaints system should they have any concerns. Young people are fully supported should they wish to complain to or about the placing authority. While young people may not get the outcomes they wish they are reassured as to why decisions have been made.

Young people's views are integral to the running of the home. They are extremely confident to approach staff with their requests, such as purchasing a small fridge for their bedroom and a games console for the home. They are really pleased that they have the console and enthusiastically regale visitors with tales of how they 'annihilated' staff at football. Staff try to argue their point, which results in an agreed rematch much to young people's delight. They say they are pleased to have a dog 'she's great'. They enjoy playing with her and are beginning to take responsibility for some of the care of the dog. This effectively enables young people to consider the needs of others.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people and are extremely proud of how well they have done. They are fully committed to helping young people overcome any difficulties to help them lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people receive exceptional individualised support from staff, which stems from their innate understanding of each young person's needs. For example, arranging work experience with the fire service to give them a 'taster' of what would be expected of them. Consequently, young people are able to make a more informed decision about

their career choices. Young people say, 'this was cool and helped me to see the other side of the work, this is something I want to do.'

Young people's care and accommodation is exceptionally well planned. Placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of their personal needs and support young people's need. Staff work exceedingly well with social worker's to ensure placement plans remain up-to-date, thus consistently meeting young people's needs. Social workers say, the home keeps them very well informed about the young people and their progress. Care planning clearly identifies the uniqueness of young people and effectively takes into consideration their needs, background, interests and views.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. Social workers report that young people are much more able to talk about any issues that are concerning them. Consequently, they are able to seek the help and support they need to move on in their lives. Young people's health care needs are identified and very well supported. Staff closely monitor young people to ensure they are fit and well and take effective action to ensure they receive the right help at the right time.

Young people's educational needs are extremely well supported. Young people say, 'I know they (staff) want the best for me,' and acknowledge the high levels of support and encouragement they receive. Staff actively support young people's learning and development and promote better outcomes. This includes taking them to view colleges and places of higher education. Staff have established strong links with educational placements. They work effectively with teachers to challenge and overcome any barriers to learning. Young people value the support they get from staff; for example, attending all meetings, social events and performances.

Young people are encouraged to take part in an extensive range of activities and are able to follow up their individual interests. Staff are extremely aware of young people's interests such as performing art and ensure this is actively encouraged. Young people are pleased that they are able to attend football matches with staff and enjoy the opportunities to challenge staff when go-karting. Staff make every effort to ensure young people have the same social opportunities as other young people and work in partnership with social workers to ensure this happens. Consequently, young people are able to enjoy their leisure time and explore new experiences such as ski centres and going on holiday.

Young people live in a warm homely environment. Their bedrooms are highly personalised and reflect the interests of each young person. The garden area is a quiet oasis where young people can relax and help staff tend the fruit and vegetables. The home is furnished to a high standard and is well maintained. However, the increase in signage around the house detracts from the homely environment.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They enable young people to overcome any difficulties they may face so they have an opportunity to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people are seen in a positive and realistic light. They live in a safe environment where they are protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living here and there are no issues of bullying.

Young people are safeguarded because of staff's secure understanding of the home's safeguarding and child protection procedures. This means they are clear on the action to take should they have any concerns about young people. Staff are committed to preserving the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of young people. Positive relationships with social workers mean staff are fully aware of any issues which may impact upon young people's safety or well-being. Therefore they are able to take appropriate action to support each young person.

Young people occasionally go missing from the home. Staff are very aware of the young people's vulnerabilities and potential triggers for being missing. While staff are aware of where young people may go this information is not always reflected in the missing from care risk assessments. Also the policy does not accurately reflect everything staff do to try and locate young people. This impacts upon the consistency and accuracy of the information. However, staff are clear on the potential dangers to young people and how these are being reduced. They work effectively with police, family members and other agencies to try and locate young people. They contact young people via mobile telephones and encourage them to return. Staff are proactive in contacting young people's known associates and go looking for them to try and locate them. Hence, young people return home quickly and safely.

Young people have clear and consistent boundaries. They know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable and say this is 'ok.' Young people are polite and courteous to one another, staff and visitors. Reward schemes work very well as they are meaningful to young people. They are extremely pleased to receive their half season ticket as they have met their specific targets. Staff provide clear, age appropriate explanations as to why specific behaviours are unacceptable. These discussions provide young people with the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour and consider different ways of handling difficult situations. Staff are very positive role models to young people and they provide high levels of appropriate praise and encouragement. This is echoed by social workers who comment upon the staff being positive role models. As a result incidents of inappropriate behaviour have significantly reduced and physical interventions and sanctions are extremely rare.

Staff carry out regular health and safety checks of the premises and obtain certifications for gas, electrical and fire safety checks. Staff ensure all visitors to the home are fully aware of the fire evacuation procedure and where to evacuate to in an emergency. Young people are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments that are consistently implemented in practice.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough and protects young people from having contact with unsuitable people. Young people are also protected by the arrangements for vetting and supervising visitors. The manager ensures staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of each young person.

Leadership and management

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

The home is led by a committed, enthusiastic and competent Registered Manager. Staff are well supported and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Through regular one-to-one supervision staff are held accountable for their performance and their individual development needs are identified. This means staff are able to request additional training, such as management qualifications, in order to enhance their skills to better support young people. Staff say they work very well as a team and thoroughly enjoy coming to work each day. They say, 'it's like family, we all want the best for them.' Regular opportunities to meet as a team mean they are able to consider young people's progress and modify any plans to ensure they remain current.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide are shared with young people, their families and placing authorities. These are well written and provide a clear picture of the home's aims and objectives. This means placing authorities, young people and their families are well aware of the care and support young people can expect to receive.

The Registered Manager has a clear and realistic understanding of the strengths of the setting and the areas for further development such as the gym and garden. The home demonstrates a capacity for sustained improvement based upon its performance over the last year, which has led to more positive outcomes for young people. The commitment to ongoing improvement is evident from the prompt action taken to rectify the shortfalls identified at this inspection, such as revising the risk assessments.

The home has sound systems to review the quality of care each month. The Registered Manager consistently monitors the running of the home and identifies areas for improvement. Action is taken to ensure the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. The home has taken positive action to address the recommendation made at the last inspection. Reports of the Registered Manager's monitoring are sent to Ofsted twice a year as required by Ofsted. This has improved upon the monitoring of the home. Also a representative for the organisation visits the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for. Effective action is taken to address any shortfalls such as creating a pet policy.

Records and documentation are usually well maintained and provide clear insight into

young people's time in the home. However, some of the young people's individual risk assessments are not sufficiently detailed. This is a recording issue and the impact is reduced due to staff's excellent understanding and knowledge of the young people. There are clear procedures for reporting any significant incident to the appropriate agencies. Although, the home has not informed Ofsted of strategy meetings held for young people. This was an oversight by the home and did not have a direct impact upon the care provided to young people.

Young people are looked after by a highly committed and dedicated staff team. Staff are very experienced and are suitably qualified. This results in young people being provided with a high level of consistency and an exceptional quality of care. The skills within the staff team effectively match the needs of the young people. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people. Staff receive good quality training to help them develop their individual skills and knowledge relevant to the young people they are caring for.

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.