

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC062248
Inspection date	19/07/2013
Inspector	Chris Scully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home offers care and accommodation for up to four young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is one of several owned by a private 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**.

Young people's needs are met well through detailed, personalised care planning, which meets their personal preferences, and individual needs. Consequently, they make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. This is supported by staffs' understanding of each young person's diverse needs. This ensures they continue to receive the help, guidance and support they need on a daily basis.

Young people's opinions, wishes and feelings are highly valued and are central to the planning and organisation of the home. They benefit from very positive relationships with staff, which are built upon honesty and trust. Social workers and police missing from care coordinators are complimentary about the care and support young people receive.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff and other young people. They are increasing in confidence which enables them to try new things. This has significantly improved upon their self-esteem and emotional resilience. Young people are safe and feel safe. This is because of the effective safeguarding and missing from care procedures as well as the health and safety checks implemented within the home. The home is generally well maintained though some areas require attention.

The home is well managed by a highly committed Registered Manager and staff team. However the systems for deputising for the Registered Manager are not clear and there are some staff training needs. Most records and documentation are generally well maintained though there are some shortfalls with regards to young

people's meetings, accident records, health care plans and some risk assessments. There are good systems in place for monitoring the quality and standard 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 within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control or restraint a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose and includes, a description of the measure, name of the person using the measure, date, time, location and the child concerned and the person carrying out the measure has been spoken to. (Regulation 17B (3) (c) (d) (e) (h))	22/08/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure there are clear arrangements in place to ensure appropriate management of the home when the Registered Manager is absent (NMS 21.5)
- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and accuracy of record keeping in particular the accident record and young people meetings (NMS 22.1)
- ensure the home provides a homely environment is clean, well maintained and decorated with particular regards for the shower cubicle, the kitchen and flooring in the annex and the storage of cleaning materials in the kitchen (NMS 10.3)
- enhance further the care and support provided to young people to minimise the risk of them going missing in particular the missing from care and child sexual exploitation risk assessments contain information as to where the young person may go and if there is a risk they may be under the influence of recreational drugs or alcohol (NMS 5.1)
- ensure young people's health is promoted in accordance with their placement plan in particular their health care plans contain detailed information in relation to any allergies young people may have (NMS 6.5)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people in particular they have access to training on child sexual exploitation and lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and transgender young people. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are increasing in confidence in their own abilities, self-esteem, emotional resilience and knowledge. This is because there are opportunities to develop an understanding of their background. This has resulted in young people going on school residential trips for the first time. Young people are extremely proud of each other's achievement such as creating a music album. They are keen for visitors to hear the songs and talk knowledgeably about who the songs were written for. They show empathy for the feelings of other young people and consider what they can do to support them. Young people benefit from detailed placement plans that clearly link to direct work undertaken by staff. This means young people benefit from a high standard of individualised care and support.

Young people benefit from access to a range of agencies and services to meet their assessed needs. They are supported and encouraged to attend health appointments and all medical checks are up to date. Each young person has a detailed health plan; these usually offer a comprehensive outline of individual needs. However, on some occasions they do not sufficiently detail the action to take should a young person have an allergic reaction. Staff are positive role models to young people. In doing so, staff ensure that young people understand the importance of maintaining good health.

Young people enjoy healthy eating and lead a healthy life style. However, some young people continue to engage in risk taking behaviours such as smoking and recreational drugs, although they are very aware of the health implications. They accept that they should not be smoking, but say they are not in the right frame of mind at this time to attempt to give up. Consequently, young people make informed decisions about their health.

Young people have a positive view of their education. Their educational achievements are good, taking into account both their attainment and progress from their starting point at the time of placement. Young people attend school and staff maintain close links with the schools to ensure that they are kept fully up to date with any developments. This provides consistency to the young people and aids in their preparation for adulthood and increases their life chances.

Some young people are extremely positive about their careers prospects. They are delighted to be commencing college courses in September, which will help them achieve their goal of becoming a midwife. Young people are confident about their forthcoming GCSE results. They say that they do not feel they would have done so well had they not been living here. This is because staff have fully supported them during this stressful period and have helped them to revise for their exams. Social workers say young people are focused on their education and career paths, something which has greatly improved since residing here. Others are relishing the opportunities afforded to them on health and beauty courses and talk enthusiastically

about what they are doing and learning. This has had a positive impact on the education as well as how they see themselves and what they can achieve.

Young people take part in a wide range of leisure activities. They have opportunities to develop confidence in their skills, enjoy their leisure time and try new things. Young people describe the activities and support from staff as really good. They spoke excitedly about shopping trips, vocal coaching and days out. This further develops confidence and encourages independence skills.

Young people maintain contact with families and friends, where appropriate. This helps young people to see their families regularly and maintain positive relationships with them. Young people talk enthusiastically about upcoming visits to see family and how they can stay for extended periods of time and travel there independently. Staff make sure that the arrangements for contact promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Staff achieve this by working closely with young people's families to ensure that contact is a positive experience for young people.

Young people's individual needs are assessed and addressed in a way that promotes young people's dignity and privacy; differences are acknowledged and respected. Staff provide support unreservedly to young people, consequently young people have their needs acknowledged and they feel included and valued.

Young people are supported to develop independence skills to prepare them for adulthood. Their plans reflect the varying degree of assistance they require to prepare them practically and emotionally for leaving care. Young people explain how they have been actively seeking part-time employment as they do not want to be doing nothing through the summer holidays. They explain how they have handed in curriculum vitae to stores and have signed up to employment agency websites. Young people are encouraged to develop skills in a range of areas, for example meal preparation, budgeting skills and household chores. Young people receive incentives and praise, as they develop their skills and demonstrate their competence.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with staff. Young people say they can talk to staff about anything and know that they will help them resolve any issues that may be concerning them. Young people's views are actively sought with regards to them and the running of the home. Young people feel valued as staff listen to them and take their views seriously, such as their own personal identity. This openness enables staff to be responsive to the young people's needs.

Staff consistently ensure the welfare of young people is paramount. They are committed to enabling young people to overcome the difficulties they may face to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people's individual well-being is central to practice. Staff see young people in a positive and realistic light. Staff work with young people in an understanding and compassionate way.

Young people have a say in their care and the way the home is run. Regular house meetings facilitate young people's opportunities to have a say about things, including activities and the menu. Young people are pleased that they are consulted and are looking forward to a range of activities over the summer, to include indoor skydiving, theme parks and 'Zorbing'. However, the recording of these meetings is not sufficient. This is because they do not portray the actual discussions or agreements on future activities. Young people are also aware of the systems in place should they wish to make a complaint. Although, they stress that this is not needed as they would talk things through with staff.

Young people's placement plans are in keeping with plans identified by the placing authority social workers. The plans provide a comprehensive picture of personal needs, the support required and the objectives young people and staff are working towards. The care planning and staffs' day-to-day practice effectively recognises young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. Staff know young people very well, they ensure young people benefit from access to the right services and help agencies to support young people.

Young people's emotional health needs are well supported. They have access to mental health services where appropriate to promote their emotional well-being. Young people are much more confident, are able to talk about their feelings and reflect upon past experiences. Consequently, they are more able to deal with things that are happening around them. The systems for the administration and storage of medication are robust and health care plans provide clear insight into the young people's health needs and the systems to support their independence.

Social workers are complimentary about the home; they say they are pleased with the progress young people are making. This is because young people's needs and changes are reviewed regularly to make sure their needs continue to be met. Staff work closely with young people and others involved in their lives. As a result young people are involved in their reviews, attend meetings and have their views listened to. Social workers say they receive detailed information on a regular basis about the young people this means they know what is happening in the young people's lives.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for young people's educational achievement and work very closely with schools to help young people achieve that best that they can. Staff are proactive in supporting young people and for looking at new ways in which to engage and maintain their interest in their education. This is reflected in the good attendance at school and the amount of awards young people receive in relation to their educational achievements. The home's morning routines effectively support young people. Staff ensure young people are up, ready and have everything they need for that day. Staff say that they are proud of young people's education and feel that the support they provide to them is a real strength of the home.

Young people live in a warm, welcoming, homely environment that meets their needs. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to reflect their interests and individual tastes. The home is generally decorated and maintained to a good

standard. However, the shower cubicle requires cleaning, some cleaning equipment should be more appropriately stored and some areas, such as the annex appear grubby, tired and worn. Young people are particularly pleased with the new pool table and enthusiastically tell visitors about the lively matches they have against each other and staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm and have a strong sense of safety and well-being. Young people say they feel safe living in the home and there are no issues of bullying. Young people say they get on well the other young people.

Staff have a good understanding of safeguarding issues and take active steps to protect young people if they are missing. For example, staff will try to find young people and keep in touch by mobile telephone to encourage a safe return. Staff are aware and do not exceed the measures they can take to prevent a child leaving without permission under current legislation and government guidance. Incidents are recorded appropriately and risk assessments including those relating to the risk of child sexual exploitation detail individual needs and agreed strategies to support and protect young people. However some do not say if a young person may be under the influence of recreational drugs or alcohol or specific places they may go to. This is a recording issue and does not reflect upon the care and support provided to each young person as staff are extremely aware of the potential issues for them. The home has developed good links with the local police and follows agreed local protocols regarding young people missing from care. A Police missing from care coordinators stated 'staff are very good at keeping me informed of any incidents, I do not have any issues with the home.'

Young people have clear, consistent boundaries and know what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Young people receive praise and rewards when they do well. As a result young people learn to manage their behaviour and solve problems. Physical interventions are rare and sanctions are reasonable consequences. However, the name of the person carrying out the restraint, the time and duration of the restraint and the discussions following this with staff and young people are not consistently noted within these records. This is a recording issue but it is, important as it encourages the young person to reflect on their behaviours and see that the home followed the correct procedures.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. However, some risk assessments are brief in their detail and therefore are not a true reflection of the work undertaken within the home. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency.

The recruitment and selection is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. The management team carefully ensures staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. Visitors are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a committed, competent and qualified Registered Manager. An appropriate action plan is in place that sets out how the home is to develop. Staff are supportive of the Registered Manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They say that the Registered Manager is always available to talk to and their positive attitude means any issues are quickly resolved.

However in recent weeks there is no clear system in place for deputising when the Registered Manager is not available. This is as a result of staff changes. Staff are generally well supported on an individual basis and receive one-to-one professional supervision. However, not all staff have received training in relation to child sexual exploitation and supporting young people with regards to their sexuality especially for those who are gay, lesbian, bi-sexual or trans-gender. This is important as the home is specialising in specific areas of work. However, senior managers are aware of this and are taking steps to address this.

The staff team reflects the cultural backgrounds of the young people living in the home and provides positive male and female role models. The numbers of staff on duty meets the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide are shared with young people, their families and placing authorities. The Statement of Purpose is well written and informative and provides the reader with information on the care and support provided.

The home is able to demonstrate its capacity for on-going improvement as it has addressed the two recommendations from the last inspection. This has improved upon the organisation and quality of care provided. This is because all staff now hold a level 3 childcare qualification or are working towards one. All new staff are enrolled on appropriate courses within six months of employment. Monitoring of the home has improved as the person carrying out the regulation 33 visits speaks to social worker and family members where possible to seek their views on the quality of care provided.

The home has also made improvements to a number of documents such as care plans, and is currently trialling a prototype within the home. The Registered Manager says this is to further improve the quality of recording and to streamline their current systems.

The home's written records provide a clear picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are organised and contain up-to-date information, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. Although on a small number of occasions records such as the young people meetings and accident records are not sufficiently detailed.

The home has good 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. A representative of the company visits the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for. There are appropriate systems in place to notify Ofsted of any significant issues with regards to the 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.