

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063318
Inspection date	05/07/2011
Inspector	Chris Scully
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/01/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a children's home for up to three young people aged 10 to 17 years with emotional or behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. The home is able to provide short and long term placements to young people and is managed by a private company.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

This is a good service with many outstanding features. The main strength of the setting is the home's commitment to providing exceptional care and support to young people. The staff and Registered Manager are enthusiastic, trained to a good standard and have an innate understanding of the complex and diverse needs of the young people. Highly personalised care means young people needs are met exceptionally well in practice and result in many positive outcomes. Staff have an excellent understanding that young people need a stable, secure and caring environment in which to thrive and develop to their full potential.

The home is effectively managed and most records and documentation are generally well maintained. However, the home has not notified Ofsted of a significant event, and there are some issues within the missing from care risk assessments, medication and pocket money records. Staff say they are well supported by the manager and meet regularly as a team. However, formal one to one meetings are not held on a regular basis. These issues have resulted in one statutory requirement and three actions being raised at this inspection.

Young people are consulted on all aspects of the home and are very pleased with the new colour schemes in their bedrooms. They are excited about their forthcoming holiday and the choice of destination. Young people say they are happy here and feel safe, 'it's like a family'. Young people have very positive relationships with staff and say they are 'sound'. They are confident to approach staff with any concerns and know that they will be listened to and supported. Social workers are complimentary about the staff and the support provided to young people. This they feel has enabled the young people to make significant progress in some areas, such as a reduction in going missing from care.

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 if any of the events listed in column 1 of the table in schedule 5 takes place, the registered person shall without delay notify the persons indicated in respect of the event in column 2 (Regulation 30)	19/07/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure all records remain accurate in particular the medication record and records of young people's pocket money (NMS 22.4)
- ensure suitable arrangements are in place staff to receive professional supervision on a regular basis. (NMS 19.3)
- ensure risk assessments made in relation to minimising the risk of young people missing from care are sufficiently detailed (NMS 5.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from highly individualised support which helps them grow in confidence. The home acknowledges racial, religious, gender and other differences and actively encourages young people to openly discuss these issues. This means young people develop positive self-images of themselves and others around them. Young people have strong trusting relationships with staff and as a result they feel valued and respected as individuals.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and have relished the opportunities to engage in the Healthier Homes scheme. This has resulted in a significant improvement in young people's attitude to healthy eating. Young people are keen to try different foods and happily leaf through cookery books searching for new recipes. Staff say young people enjoy their themed nights. For example young people enjoyed the Caribbean night with the reggae, reggae chicken, which was very well received.

Young people on pathways plans are making very good progress. They develop budgeting and marketing skills as they purchase and prepare their own meals and snack. Excellent support from staff continually enhances young people's cookery skills and understanding of healthy food options.

Young people are all registered with the appropriate health care practitioners. This means they are all receiving good care in relation to their individual health issues. Young people are effectively supported to attend appointments. Staff are extremely proactive in seeking alternative treatments to ensure young people receive the care they need. For example, appointments are made at the dental hospital as some young people are afraid of needles. Young people are able to make well informed choices about their health. This is because they receive excellent guidance and support from staff on a wide range of topics such as sexual health, drug use, alcohol abuse and smoking.

Young people are making very good progress with their education. They attend mainstream schools and their attendance is excellent. Some young people have recently completed their exams and are looking forward to securing college courses such as car mechanics to enhance their career prospects. Young people say staff are very supportive of them and are enabling them to complete their application forms and attend interviews for college. Young people's attainment and progress at school is excellent. A young person said, 'I go to school, but I don't like it,' but thinks that they are doing 'ok'. Reports from schools clearly demonstrate that young people are making excellent progress in relation to their starting points.

Young people benefit from suitable contact with their families. This enables them to sustain positive relationships with those people who are important to them. Staff effectively facilitate contact with families which ensures young people maintain appropriate relationships while maintaining their safety and well-being. Staff are very aware that contact can be stressful for young people and make sure they are suitable and sensitively supported. They listen to young people and help them to work through their feelings in relation to contact visits. This enables young people to make informed choices about who they wish to see in the future.

Young people are being well-prepared for adult life. They achieve this by undertaking more tasks for themselves, such as doing their own laundry, preparing meals and other household chores. Young people say they feel staff are very supportive and provide good advice regarding budgeting and food preparation. As a result young people feel that they are achieving and have a positive outlook on the future. This is echoed by social worker's who say that young people are doing very well with their independent living skills.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy extremely positive relationships with staff and say that staff care about them. Young people say staff are 'sound' and 'we're like a family.' Staff are creative in finding ways to encourage young people to make progress in all aspects of their lives. Young people are respectful and courteous towards staff and others. They know they are listened to and that their wishes are taken into account with regard to all aspects of their life and the running of the home. They are very pleased that staff listened to their choice of colours for their bedrooms and that they have had a say in the refurbishment of the home.

Young people know that they can have a say in their reviews and can choose whether or not to attend these meetings. They know that due consideration will be given to their requests, such as remaining at the home while they complete their college course. Similarly staff are proactive in giving clear reasons as to why young person's wishes may not be acted upon such as their request for a 60 inch plasma television in their bedroom. Young people are actively involved in their care planning and have access to the records held on them at the home, such as their day sheets. Young people know how to make a complaint. However, they say that this is not necessary, 'as there is nothing they want to complain about.'

Staff's consistently high aspirations for young people mean that they always place the young people at the heart of their practice and want the best possible outcomes for them. Careful care planning and staff's exceptional understanding of the young people's individual needs means young people are able to make very good progress in all aspects of their lives.

Young people's care and accommodation is planned exceptionally well. The objectives for the home and young people are clearly outlined and understood by all staff. Highly personalised placement plans mean there is a comprehensive picture of the young person's needs, the support they require and how this will be achieved. Staff are highly committed to helping young people overcome any difficulties they may face. As a result young people are able to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Young people live in a very healthy environment where their physical and emotional well-being is exceptionally well supported. Young people's health and well-being is of paramount importance to staff. Young people's emotional, physical and mental health is actively identified on admission and is effectively supported by staff. For example, excellent partnerships with health care professionals, such as Child and Mental Health Services means young people receive the care and support that they need. Staff ensure young people receive appropriate health care advice and medical treatment when they are feeling unwell. Staff safely manage the arrangements for medication, which ensures young people receive their medication at the right time.

Young people are making very good progress in relation to their educational starting points. Staff are very proud of the young people's educational achievements and have high aspirations for them. They create stimulating environments which encourage young people to ask questions, solve problems and they use creative ways to engage young people's interests. Excellent relationships with schools ensure young people fully participate in all activities, such as school trips.

The home's routines actively promote young people being able to get to school on time and be fully prepared to take their end of year examinations. They enable young people to complete their homework by taking them to the library to conduct research and checking their planner. Staff support young people in school by attending parent's evenings and other school events. Young people are able to engage in their education as staff have established effective links with schools. This means staff are able to effectively challenge and remove or minimise any barriers to young people's full participation in learning.

Young people are always encouraged to engage in a wide range of activities within the community. Staff are extremely aware of the barriers to participation for some young people and provide suitable alternatives, which they can undertake with staff. Staff are proactive in encouraging young people's interests such as seeking guitar lessons and helping them to join the local gym. This effectively provides young people with the opportunities to enjoy their leisure time and take part in activities in the community that are available to all young people. Young people of both sexes enjoy the 'pamper nights' which enable them to try different beauty products. Young people say they are looking forward to their forthcoming holiday and the activities they have planned

Young people live in a very comfortable family house, which blends in well in the neighbourhood. The house is clean and decorated to a good standard. The home is currently undergoing a radical programme of refurbishment; this is partially completed and has significantly enhanced the décor and appearance of the home. Young people are extremely pleased with the results and the opportunities they have had to contribute to the colour schemes and new accessories. Evidence of the young people's personalities are intertwined throughout the home. Young people say they feel at home here.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in safe environment where they are effectively protected from harm. Staff are very respectful of young people privacy. Young people know that there may be occasions whereby staff need to conduct searches of their belongings to ensure their safety and well-being. Young people are protected from harm due to staff's excellent understanding of the home's safeguarding procedures. This means staff are able to act swiftly should they have a concern about a young person. Staff's innate understanding of the young people enables them to act in their best interest. Young people say they feel safe and would talk to staff if they had any concerns or worries as 'staff care about us and will know what to do'.

On the whole young people choose not to go missing very often and are generally kept safe by staff's vigilance. They are safeguarded because staff endeavour to reduce the opportunities for young people to go missing. This has had a dramatic effect for some young people who now in consultation with staff set new incentives and timescales to work towards. This has resulted in a steady decline in the number of incidents of young people going missing. Social worker's are very pleased with how the home has handled these situations. They feel it is positive that the young people will contact the home to let them know they are safe as this is something they would not have previously done.

Young people's safety is of paramount importance to staff. Excellent relationships with the police mean young people are usually located quickly and return home safely. Staff constantly keep in touch with young people by mobile phone when they are away from home and are refusing to return. This means while staff may not know where they are, they know that they are safe. Risk assessments are in place in relation to young people missing from care, but on occasion these lack detail and are not clear on the actual action to take. However, staff are very clear on what they are doing to reduce the risk of young people going missing.

Young people's behaviour is generally very good. Staff are extremely good at encouraging young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. This is achieved by consistently praising them, talking to them and helping them to understand the reasons behind their behaviour.

Young people say that bullying is not an issue for them and that if this was to occur they would speak to the staff about it. Young people say that while they do not want to be sanctioned the rules are fair. Sanctions are occasionally applied and in some instances young people are able earn back the sanction. Staff feel this is a more productive method for the young people as they are able to reflect upon their behaviour and turn this into a positive outcome. Restraints are not used in the home. Staff use distraction and de-escalation techniques effectively to minimise any situations. Staff's excellent awareness of young people's behaviours means they are able to put highly effective strategies in to place to counteract this.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety checks, including fire drills, gas and electrical testing to ensure the premises are safe. Staff ensure young people know how to evacuate the building in the event of fire and are proactive in reminding

young people that they must leave the premises during fire drills. Details of fire drills are recorded but on occasion the time of the drill is omitted. Staff are proactive in ensuring the young people safety when work persons are on site. For example, ensuring work persons are supervised at all times and having major work carried out when the young people are on holiday.

Robust recruitment and vetting procedures means young people are cared for by suitably qualified, experienced and vetted staff. All visitors to the home are required to sign in and out of the visitor's book and are appropriately supervised. The home is secure, which prevents unauthorised persons gaining access to the home. As a result young people are effectively protected from harm.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is effectively managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose and young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support provided.

Young people enjoy outstanding outcomes because of the commitment of the new Registered Manager. The enthusiasm of the Registered Manager is infectious and in the short time they have been in post has proved very positive for young people and staff. New recording systems for team meetings and other documentation, has resulted in a more consistent approach to the recording of information within the home. As a result young people are more involved with their care planning and the improved opportunities for consultation mean they have a greater say in the running of the home.

The Registered Manager and staff demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional care to all young people, which is tailored to their individual needs and circumstances. The results of which are demonstrated in the reduction in young people going missing, and the excellent progress they are making with regard to their education, confidence and self-esteem.

The Registered Manager has identified some of the strengths and some areas for development for the service. They use the homes monitoring systems appropriately to identify areas for improvement. Records and documentation are generally well maintained although there are some minor omissions. The medication record has not been completed on two occasions and the recording of some young people's pocket monies is not always clear. There have been two significant incidents since the last inspection of these one has not been forwarded to Ofsted in line with the regulations. However, all other parties were informed and appropriate action was taken to ensure the young persons safety.

Staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities and the high expectations for providing exceptional childcare. They say they feel well supported by the Registered Manager. They confirm the manager is always available and they have regular opportunities for one to one supervision. However, during the last few months staff's supervision has been inconsistent, which has resulted in some staff not having this on a monthly basis. In contrast staff meetings are held on a regular basis and provide opportunities to discuss the young people's progress and ways of working. This means staff are continually evaluating and reflecting upon their practice. As a result young people continue to make outstanding progress in all areas.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.