

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063380
Inspection date	06/08/2013
Inspector	Julian Mason
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	04/02/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This is a privately owned children's home. The home accommodates up to four young people with emotional and/or 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 high quality care delivered by an established and experienced staff team. Care planning is highly personalised and reflects each young person's identity, history and individual needs. Because of this, young people are able to make good progress from the point at which they arrive in the home. Young people are positive about the care they receive and feel confident that staff have their best interests in mind. Young people feel listened to and valued, staff work very positively with them to help build confidence in their skills, knowledge and abilities needed for their personal development.

Young people have good relationships with the staff team. They say they are confident in talking to members of the team if they have any issues or concerns. Professionals working with the home say that all staff have a good knowledge and understanding of young people's needs. This helps to ensure that there is consistency of care, regardless of which staff are on duty.

Staff work hard to keep young people safe. There have been some challenging issues within the group of young people, resulting in some difficult experiences and significant change in circumstances. The Registered Manager and staff team use the home's procedures effectively to manage these challenges, which includes involving external professionals in order to achieve placement stability and safe outcomes for all young people. The management arrangements are robust and the team work well together to ensure young people receive consistently high standards of care and support.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Overall, young people are making sound progress in key areas of their lives. Young people gain emotional stability from staff who help them talk about and make sense of their experiences and circumstances. This helps young people feel sufficiently secure so they are able to address some of their difficulties that may hamper their future progress. Young people are positive about how staff help them and highlight that the whole team are very supportive and want them to do well.

Young people are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles and are well supported to attend their individual health appointments. Staff acknowledge young people's rights to make choices about their health but sometimes seek to educate and influence individuals where outcomes could be improved. For example, promoting a greater interest in diet and exercise, increasing awareness of how to conduct personal relationships safely, and supporting engagement in therapeutic services to aid emotional resilience and self-esteem. Young people benefit from this approach because of the staff team's focus on improving health and well-being.

Young people are well supported through their school and college placements. Staff have access to detailed information about individual needs and abilities and this helps them provide the right support for each young person. The team work in partnership with education staff and strongly support and promote young people's learning and development. Where young people struggle with their attendance or relationships, staff work hard to help individuals overcome their difficulties. Young people's engagement and attainment improves as a result this focused support.

Young people's contact arrangements are well known which also includes necessary and agreed limits or restrictions on arrangements. Family visits and phone calls are well supported because staff understand the importance young people place on these arrangements. Staff show a clear commitment to agreed arrangements even though contact may sometimes be challenging and difficult for young people to manage.

Young people learn about how to look after themselves in preparation for adulthood and leaving care. The home's approach is not only to help develop practical life skills but to build a young person's self-esteem and confidence. Staff carefully balance the need to ensure young people are safe against their need to move towards being more self-sufficient and independent.

Quality of care

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

Some young people have strong attachments with staff while others who are new to the home are developing their relationships. The staff team have a very successful track record in creating the right environment for young people to feel secure and confident with their carers. Staff provide clear boundaries in terms of expected

standards of behaviour. Support for each individual is high, which leaves little room for poor behaviour to occur before it is addressed. The very well established communal routines ensure that any issues that arise are tackled quickly through daily discussions or individual child-focused meetings.

Young people are frequently encouraged to put forward their wishes and feelings. Staff listen to their points of view and are clear about when they cannot always act on these. The staff team make decisions carefully and always encourage and consider the input of each young person. Young people feel involved and consulted and this further adds to their sense of what they say is important and taken seriously. Young people know how to make a formal complaint if necessary but have not needed to do this for a long time. If young people have a worry or concern they prefer to talk to staff informally as this results in resolving things quickly.

The Registered Manager pays particular attention to planning and coordinating young people's support to ensure that positive progress is achieved. Risks are assessed regularly and reflected in written information that staff use to guide the way they work each day. Consequently, staff are able to adapt and change the way they work quickly to ensure risks are managed effectively. The home is excellent at tailoring the service to ensure it carefully meets individual needs.

Young people live in a home that is well maintained and indistinguishable from other homes in the street. Clear task oriented management results in a clean, comfortable environment that resembles a welcoming family home. The general atmosphere is homely, with young people freely assessing all communal areas when they choose. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and their belongings are safe. They are involved and consulted about new furnishings and décor and can have their bedrooms redecorated to reflect changing preferences.

Young people participate in a range of leisure and recreational activities that helps them enjoy their free time. Staff actively consult young people about what they would like to do. Young people have recently enjoyed a short break to London and have been involved in choosing their forthcoming summer holiday destination. The home is well staffed so young people can do different things at the same time if they wish. Access to community facilities and services are very good and this helps widen the choices for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are relaxed and comfortable in the home and feel safe. Staff create a calm and relaxed atmosphere where young people's privacy and personal space is respected. Young people do not go missing from the home, although at times they are not in the home when they should be. However, staff know where they are so they can assess risks and agree how and when young people return to the home. Staff deal with unauthorised absences well, young people are protected by sound procedures and practices that helps keep them safe.

Young people benefit from the home being physically safe and secure. The environment is maintained well and regular safety checks ensure that equipment and utilities work safely. Fire prevention equipment is in place and serviced according to professional guidance. Internal fire drills and fire equipment checks are regularly undertaken to ensure everyone can respond appropriately in an emergency. Young people's safety is being further enhanced by an upgrade to fire safety systems and some internal improvements to the building.

Staff use established procedures and practices to help protect young people and promote their welfare. Detailed assessments are in place, which identify any areas of risk and vulnerability for each young person. Staff use this information to shape their daily work and practices. The Registered Manager and staff team regularly discuss safeguarding practices in one-to-one and team meetings. Staff know how to respond to allegations or suspicions of abuse or report concerns about a young person's safety. Where safeguarding concerns are apparent, these are reported quickly to necessary professionals to ensure a multi-agency approach is instigated. The home's records reflect that the Registered Manager works in partnership with other child protection agencies in making sure all young people are safeguarded.

Young people's safety is promoted by a further range of effective measures. These include the appropriate vetting of staff and the implementation of effective and consistent behaviour management strategies, which recognise young people's particular vulnerabilities and difficulties. Young people understand the rules of the home and they feel that staff are very fair and reasonable when it comes to helping them with their behaviour. Young people receive lots of rewards and praise, the use of sanctions is minimal and physical restraint is rarely used.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The home continues to provide and maintain excellent standards of care to each young person. The Registered Manager has addressed the requirement from the last inspection by ensuring all measures of control are recorded correctly and in line with regulation. The Registered Manager actively ensures that all events regarding the protection of young people are notified to the appropriate authorities and that staff practice is consistent with safeguarding young people.

The Statement of Purpose is clear, concise and detailed. The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. Young people, placing social workers and the staff team have an accurate knowledge of the stated aims and objectives. The Registered Manager consistently and actively monitors the quality of care provided by the home and has a strong and accurate knowledge of the home's strengths and weaknesses. The Registered Manager has plans for the development of the home so that it continues to provide high quality care for young people.

The home is resourced very well and there are sufficient numbers of trained staff who provide flexible and responsive care. Most of the staff team are qualified and have long-standing experience of providing high quality care to young people with very different needs. Staff are competently supervised and supported in their day-to-day work and are enabled to regularly reflect on the quality of care that they provide to young people. The staff team are managed effectively to achieve the optimum outcomes for young people. Their performance is appraised annually and they have set targets to achieve in terms of developing their skills and knowledge.

The young people's records are concise, up to date and provide a clear picture of their progress and development. The records successfully contribute to the understanding of young people's lives and staff provide a range of information that enables young people to reflect on their time in the service. For example, every young person has an album with photographs and mementoes of events relating to their stay in 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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.