

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063895
Inspection date	12/07/2012
Inspector	Elaine Cray
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	01/03/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This privately operated home offers accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and 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 make good progress at this home. They grow in confidence and develop positive identities. Key strengths of the service are the positive relationships between young people and staff coupled with strong boundaries and safeguarding strategies.

Young people receive personalised and well planned care. Young people are supported with effective frameworks to support their behaviour, health, education, social and safeguarding needs. Young people benefit from the home's significant contribution in independence preparation and their transition through adolescence and into adult life.

Young people are consistently supported to attend education and address significant deficits in educational attendance and achievement. Young people attend the home's school and there are good links with local schools and colleges. Young people are proud of their achievements. They are consistently rewarded for their own individual achievements and development. Young people with complex difficulties make good progress and this contributes to their self-confidence and aspirations for the future.

Safeguarding is promoted and facilitated with effective risk and behaviour management strategies. Young people's safety and risk taking activities are closely monitored and managed. Despite a recent downward trend, overall the safety and welfare needs of young people are significantly improved. Young people progressively develop an understanding of how to keep themselves safe and improve behaviour.

Clear efforts are made to listen to young people's concerns and promote ways for their wishes, feelings and views to be included in the running of the service.

The management and staff team implement procedures and practices that are established and well monitored. The quality assurance processes maintain existing standards and the management team have a clear focus on improvement of the service. However, some shortfalls have emerged as the home experiences a recent period of disruption. Increased staffing levels must continue during the current period of disruption as a result of receiving new admissions and increased challenging behaviour. The emergency admissions procedure has not effectively matched young people, prepared them for admission and obtained the required information. Missing from care protocols lack impact and exacerbate positive working relationships with the police. Young people experience risks to their health with regular smoking. Staff supervision and team meetings lack regularity.

One statutory requirement and seven recommendations are set as a result of this inspection.

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
27 (2001)	ensure all persons employed receive appropriate supervision and appraisal. (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31/08/2012

Recommendations

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

- hold further discussion about working effectively and in partnership with other agencies concerned with child protection. This is with particular regard to the home's relationship with the local police and implementing missing from care protocols (NMS 4.7)
- review the home's procedures and compatibility with Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols and procedures maintained and managed by the police. Discuss and explore how such protocols comply with any other processes required and specified in the individual child's care plan (NMS 5.5 & 5.6)
- provide up to date written records for when a child goes missing (NMS 5.10)

- ensure children's physical health needs are promoted. This is with particular regard to children smoking and regimes in the home (NMS 6.1)
- implement clear procedures for introducing children to the home, the staff and the other children living there, which covers planned and where permitted, emergency/immediate placements and ensure they help children understand what to expect from living in the home (NMS 11.1)
- ensure a review is initiated no more than 72 hours after any emergency admission to consider whether the child should remain at the home, or it is in that child's interests to move to a different placement (NMS 11.7)
- ensure the home is comfortable and homely. This is with particular regard to providing garden furniture. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress in this service. They have good opportunities to explore opportunities and their potential. Young people thrive, learn and grow in maturity. They are supported to explore how they see themselves, relate to others and manage the challenges of growing up.

Some young people thrive, learn and develop with significantly improved outcomes in education, health and behaviour. Other more recently admitted young people are less engaged in their placements. Their negative behaviours have quickly impacted on the more established young people. These recent dynamics have temporarily interrupted the positive outcomes usually experienced by young people living at this home.

The majority of young people achieve good outcomes. They have positive attachments and relationships with staff. They enjoy engaging in meaningful relationships with staff. They have also forged relatively long-term relationships with other young people who have recently moved on from the home. These positive relationships and role models have been an important facet to young people's development. These strong and positive attachments are demonstrated by how positively young people talk about the staff and how those who have left the home stay in regular contact with the service. Social workers say that young people who present complex difficulties have been able to form good attachments and speak highly of the home.

Young people grow in confidence and make good relationships because they have their needs clearly assessed. This process has not been quite so thorough for recently admitted young people and they lack initial engagement with the staff. Overall young people have greater self-worth because their individuality is facilitated and celebrated. They are given opportunities to make sense of their backgrounds, experiences and their behaviours. Young people are encouraged to express themselves in terms of sexuality, connections to their local community and their

cultural and religious requirements are facilitated. Young people are cared for in an environment that proactively identifies, develops and celebrates difference. Classroom displays, discussion with staff, menus and activities both in and outside the home enable young people to broaden their identities and tolerance of others.

While some young people initially find challenges in attending education, some feel very proud of their significantly improved attendance and achievement at school. Young people are able to try different opportunities and develop new skills. Most young people say they feel good about progress they make at school. They talk about developments and achievements in numeracy and literacy skills, developing artistic flair, woodwork skills and knowledge in horticulture. Young people presented excellent knowledge about and commitment to growing their own vegetables. They enjoy developing their horticultural knowledge and are clearly motivated by the opportunity to grow and eat their own vegetables.

Some young people do exceptionally well and earn extra pocket money and treats as part of their behaviour and education incentives. They grow in self-esteem because they know staff are proud of them. Young people see education as a key element to growing up. They understand education is important because they get additional support from care staff in the home's classroom and receive rewards for their efforts. Young people are particularly appreciative of the recent summer ball and recognition by staff for their efforts. They enjoyed dressing up, eating a three course meal and receiving awards for their achievements.

Young people feel valued because they are encouraged to express their views, feelings and wishes. They feel listened to because key workers and staff make time to talk about their interests and concerns. They also appreciate how their concerns are taken seriously. They are confident about the staff and manager. They receive letters from the manager about the outcomes and action taken when they raise concerns. Staff have also helped them to access advocates and contact Ofsted.

Young people participate and feel involved in the running of the house. They are able to attend weekly house meetings and can discuss what has been happening and help make decisions about menus, group activities and are fully involved in planning the week ahead.

Young people enjoy good and improved health. They are supported to understand and begin to take responsibility for their health needs. Some young people have a developing awareness about how their emotional and mental well-being is part of their health. They are now open to engaging with anger management support and look at how drug-use may impact on their mental health. Young people also develop an understanding of how lifestyle choices can impact on their health. While young people maintain healthier lifestyles in terms of healthy eating, exercise and better personal hygiene; they all continue to smoke.

Quality of care

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

Young people are looked after by a competent and well trained staff team. Staff provide a nurturing and stable environment for young people to grow up in. However the usual consistency of care is most recently disrupted due to changes in the group of young people living at the home. Some well-established young people have recently and successfully moved on to independence. The remaining young people have been immediately joined by new young people. These admissions have destabilised the home resulting in significant periods of challenging behaviour.

The usual consistent and effective implementation of the home's care framework is currently variable. Staff spend extensive periods of time managing new, demanding and challenging group dynamics. Much of this time is attributed to implementing behaviour management strategies and going missing from home protocols. The implementation of systems and processes within the home lack consistent attention due to these recent demands.

For example, the usual admission procedures have been limited for some young people. Emergency placements have not been directly followed up with the expected 72 hours planning meeting. Consequently information about young people, particularly in terms of their missing from care profiles, is compromised. The home's admission process includes a placement matching process. The lack of information about new young people and how this may impact on presenting difficulties of the existing young people has compromised this process. New behaviours, particularly in terms of patterns of going absent, have significantly impacted on young people who face their own personal challenges.

The home's clear and comprehensive induction process for new young people has not been fully implemented. While staff have done their utmost to welcome new young people they have not received regular key working sessions. This shortfall in induction and sharing of information has led to poor engagement of young people in their new placements. Some young people are not clear about their care plans, the programme for activities and arrangements for free-time. More established young people have not had time to consider the impact of their peers leaving their home or new young people arriving.

Discussion with young people, social workers, staff and inspecting records in the home show that prior to this most recent disruption, the systems and frameworks in the home contribute to good outcomes for young people. Young people clearly benefit from the strong ethos and staff commitment to developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with young people. The service usually provides sound provision of care resulting in substantial long-term placements. Young people make meaningful attachments. They develop in maturity and are supported to positively move on to independent placements. These positive relationships demonstrate that staff are consistently concerned with the welfare, education and progress of young people.

Young people are encouraged to express their individuality. Staff have a good knowledge about the social, cultural and religious backgrounds of young people.

They provide an environment where young people can express themselves, explore their backgrounds and develop positive identities. Young people are supported to maintain positive contact with their local communities, develop positive family contact and build self-confidence.

The participation of young people is valued and promoted in the home. There are weekly young people's meetings and regular key working contact. These processes are integral to including young people's views and wishes in the running of the home and their placement plans. Young people know about and use the home's complaints' process because information is displayed in the house and contained in the young people's guide. Young people can also discuss their concerns in the weekly house meetings. Information about the external agencies young people can contact is also on display.

The majority of young people are supported with clear care planning, risk management procedures and behaviour management plans. Written plans reflect the individuality and diversity of each young person. Health care plans are comprehensive and closely monitored. Individual educational plans provide young people with effective packages to support their learning. Young people engage with education because staff are good at making these plans meaningful. Staff understand and respect how young people's challenges and experiences have impacted on them. There are clear procedures to promote the assessment and review of each young person's placement. Young people and their families are encouraged to be part of this process, contributing to the overall good level of care provided.

Staff provide good support to young people who are embarking on their transition to young adulthood and independent living. Young people are supported as care and education planning is meaningfully expanded to include independence preparation, exploring further education and employment opportunities. Staff are dedicated and enthusiastic in encouraging young people to explore opportunities to develop self-confidence and achieve their full potential. There is a varied range of activities so young people can try new opportunities and interests. Young people are very proud of the home's vegetable garden, they enjoy go-karting and enjoy performing skate board and scooter stunts in the garden.

Young people's physical and emotional health is promoted and monitored. The service maintains close liaison with local medical services and other health support agencies in order to provide informed and appropriate care. There are recently improved and effective procedures for the safe administration of medication. Young people are involved in planning well balanced menus which take into account personal preferences and cultural needs. Staff are proactive in enabling young people to understand health risks, adolescence and to take personal responsibility for maintaining healthy lifestyles. There are clear boundaries around smoking, with the supply and smoking of cigarettes monitored by staff. However, these restrictions have little impact as all young people at the home smoke. They organise their time according to the cigarette breaks that are part of their daily routines.

The house is generally well maintained and provides young people with a good environment to meet their needs. The standard of décor inside the house is good. Staff make clear efforts to make the house comfortable and homely. Young people are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms. There are good levels of privacy for young people; they are able to lock their bedrooms and have bathrooms. There is no seating area in the garden as young people have persistently damaged the garden furniture that has been purchased.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are protected with robust recruitment processes. Visitors are checked, vetted and monitored. All staff are aware of their own roles and responsibilities and other agencies involved in keeping young people safe.

Young people's safety and welfare is promoted. Staff are trained in safeguarding procedures. They are knowledgeable of and implement sound safeguarding strategies. They are able to protect young people because they know who to contact should they have concerns and when there are serious incidents in the home. Staff have access to Local Safeguarding Children Board guidance and have recently demonstrated appropriate and effective reporting and notification procedures.

Procedures to manage young people who go missing from the home are in place. Written guidance and staff practice is in line with the local authority's Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols. Patterns of going missing are addressed with appropriate staffing levels, in-depth risk assessment of young people and strong relationships with the police. Procedures, including staff following young people, encouraging them to return and prompt referral to the police are routinely implemented. Young people usually return safely to the home. Up to recent weeks incidents of young people going missing from care have been significantly reduced.

Over recent weeks the implementation of the missing from home procedures has been clearly tested. The risk posed by specific young people and the emergency admission of other young people has resulted in a significant increase in missing from home incidents. The current individual protocols, increase in frequency and overall reporting procedures currently place exceptional pressure on police resources. As staff consistently follow and look for young people there is also significant pressure and constraints on staffing of the home. Moreover the current strategies have little impact on the new group of young people leaving the home without permission. It is credit to the staff and police that young people are protected and they often return quickly and safely to the home. These current circumstances test what has previously been a positive working relationship between the police and staff at the home.

Young people who are established at the home understand the rules, expectations for behaviour and value their stable and meaningful relationships with staff. They say they feel safe and bullying is dealt with. Recently admitted young people present

clear challenges in transferring to their new and very structured placements. These difficulties in transition have resulted in incidents of threatening behaviour, a clear increase in young people going missing and police being called to the home.

Despite these challenges staff continue to provide clear boundaries and structure. Young people's risk taking behaviours are well monitored by staff. Safeguarding strategies focus on robust risk assessment, with practical risk management strategies having a positive impact on individual behaviour.

Behaviours improve because staff consistently implement behaviour plans. They positively reinforce and reward positive behaviours and achievements. Some young people have very complex needs and staff are dedicated in making behaviour plans and expectations meaningful. They have a good knowledge of how young people's previous experiences impact on and influence current behaviours and risks to others. Key working records show meaningful discussion about behaviours, improvements and more recent downward trends in young people's risk taking activities.

Staff are trained in behaviour management, including physical intervention. The recent escalation of challenging behaviours by some young people has resulted in an increase in sanctions, financial reparations and negative consequences. Positively the manager and staff have given wider consideration to using a restorative justice approach to managing behaviour. This has been approached alongside the strong ethos of positively reinforcing behaviour. Documentation is regularly monitored and trends in behaviour are used to develop more effective behaviour management strategies. Young people's comments and their records show that they are asked about sanctions and their views on their behaviour.

Attention to the supervision of young people is detailed and consistent. Young people are safer because there is a dedicated response to discourage them from accessing risk-taking activities and associations. While there is a recent downturn in behaviour; discussion with young people shows their awareness of and ability to manage their own safety is improved. They say staff talk to them about making positive choices and leading safer lifestyles.

Young people live in a safe environment. Young people know what to do in the event of a fire. The house is safe and secure, health and safety checks are an integral part of the daily running of the home.

Leadership and management

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

This service has addressed the recommendation from the previous interim inspection and young people's comments are now recorded in the sanctions and physical restraint records.

The home strives to provide young people with a stable, safe and nurturing environment. Staffing levels are adequate in terms of the numbers of young people

in the home. There is a core staff team of appropriately qualified, experienced and trained staff. However, there has been a short delay in adjusting staffing arrangements in order to respond to the significant change in young people living at the home. During this short period staffing levels did not fully facilitate behaviour management in the home. A recent increase in staffing now ensures young people can receive positive one-to-one attention with staff. This results in young people having less opportunity to engage in negative group dynamics in the home.

The increase in staffing also facilitates more effective management and administration in the home. The care framework is implemented by competent staff with good knowledge of the clear and regularly reviewed policies and procedures. However, increased behaviour management pressure on staff has resulted in some slippage in the regularity of staff supervision. There has also been the cancellation of a team meeting and delays in maintaining some centralised recording in the home.

Despite these shortfalls staff continue to implement the clear and effective structures that are integral to the safety, welfare and development of the young people. The staff team is well balanced with good levels of experience and competency. They are enthusiastic, work closely as a team and feel supported by the manager. Their ongoing professional development is supported with a varied training programme.

Management systems are established and robust. Procedurally the service is very sound. Daily briefings and good staff communication contribute to the running of the service. Trends and patterns are used to address improvement because records are generally clear and accountable. The manager has a good knowledge of the legal framework and carries out regular management checks. These checks run alongside monthly checks by an independent visitor. There is a comprehensive audit against the requirements and standards set down for registered children's homes.

The home has a clear leadership. The manager has a clear vision to provide and continuously improve the care framework and outcomes for young people. There is clear commitment to identifying good practice, shortfalls and further areas for development. The service has a development plan to ensure all areas of the home continue to develop and improve. Staff continuously strive to provide an environment where all young people are enabled to develop their individuality and achieve their full potential.

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.