

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC063997
Inspection date	16/10/2012
Inspector	Tracy Murty
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

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

© 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-owned children's home provides accommodation for three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The provider organisation operates nationally, providing a range of care services for children and young people.

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**.

From their starting points at moving to live in this home, young people make good progress in all areas. Attendance in education is very good and young people achieve skills and qualifications, which will assist them in securing employment in later life. The dedicated staff team ensures that they receive all necessary services and support to promote their physical, emotional and psychological well-being.

Individual placement and independence plans focus on young people's needs, and sensitive and skilled staff support ensures their holistic needs continue to be met. The staff team work closely together to ensure that young people receive consistent care and boundaries. Given their complex needs, young people form meaningful relationships with each other and with peers in the local community. Young people feel engaged in the day-to-day running of the home and able to express their wishes, thoughts and feelings. Any complaints raised receive prompt and detailed consideration by the manager. All complaints are resolved to the total satisfaction of both young people.

The manager works closely with the staff team to ensure that young people's needs are central to the running of the home. Young people contribute to the development of their individual plans and wider plans for the home. Their comments and views on these are not clearly recorded on all occasions, to reflect their input. The recording of information is robust, clear and detailed. The monitoring of some records by the manager is not sufficiently robust. This relates to the reviewing and updating of some plans and records in the home. This does not have a negative impact on the well-being of the young people in the home at this time.

The manager has devised and implemented a range of development plans for the home, including young people in this process. There is a clear awareness of the strengths and weaknesses and plans to address these. Young people report feeling safe and protected in the home by the staff team. From their starting points, young people increase in confidence and feel secure and well cared for by staff.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the manager regularly monitors, in line with regulations, all records kept by the home to ensure compliance with the home's policies, to identify any concerns about specific incidents and to identify patterns and trends. Immediate action is taken to address any issues raised by this monitoring (NMS 21.2)
- ensure that children are actively encouraged to read their files, other than confidential or third party information, and to correct errors and add personal statements. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

From their starting points, young people in this home develop in confidence and self-esteem. They engage with staff in a positive and meaningful manner and learn how to form and sustain friendships with peers. Young people understand the reasons for being in care and feel that staff support them to make sense of their life histories.

Young people develop life skills, which will assist them greatly when they move on. Young people learn how to manage their own finances, to shop and cook their own meals and to have bank accounts. One young person took great pride in explaining how much they have learned since moving to live in this home. From being angry and confused most of the time, they now felt that they could manage their emotions and were ready to move to independence with confidence. This is attributed to the commitment and dedication of the manager and staff team in the home. One young person said 'I am a different and better person than when I moved in here.'

Young people have access to a wide range of services to meet their diverse health needs. Some young people take personal responsibility for making and attending their own routine health appointments. This promotes a sense of responsibility for young people, which will assist them in later life. Staff ensure that young people know the value of looking after their physical, emotional and psychological needs. When young people show reluctance to attend health related appointments, staff use key work sessions to engage them in discussion. This has included showing young

people photos of poor dental hygiene and the impact of failing to attend dental appointments. Young people feel supported to understand how to meet their health needs consistently and with staff support.

The home has formed a positive working relationship with the local looked after children's nurse, who visits the home to offer support to young people. Young people also have access to local mental health services and receive counselling and medication support. The staff team also ensure that young people access other health services, such as dietician and sexual health and relationship services. Young people in this home feel that over time, they begin to understand and make sense of their pasts, with the support of staff and other agencies.

Young people engage well in education. Some young people had very poor attendance and engagement in education prior to moving to this home. They now attend on a daily basis and achieve well, given their starting points. Young people engage in further education and have successfully completed courses. Young people have aspirations for their futures and feel supported by staff to achieve their goals. Imaginative and innovative practice ensures that all young people achieve to the best of their abilities. Where young people struggle with formal education, practical skills are promoted to develop skills. Young people feel supported to attend and take pride in their daily achievements. Staff praise young people and encourage them to develop new interests over time.

Young people develop social skills and take part in a range of activities in the local community. Such activities include fishing, skateboarding, scooter parks, camping, day trips, playing pool and shopping. Staff encourage young people to use public transport, where appropriate on their own and to have free time in the local community. This enables them to form friendships and to access local services with confidence.

The dedicated staff team support young people to maintain contact with their families and significant others. Staff take young people for contact and ensure that they and their families have meaningful time together. In line with agreed plans, staff support family members to visit young people at the home and to take part in activities with them. The manager ensures that significant family members have regular updates on young people's progress and shares key information with them. One parent praised the manager for ensuring that the needs of their child are consistently met and sharing information with them. This enables both young people and significant people in their lives to feel that contact is valued and promoted.

Young people have formed friendships in the local area, through their attendance in education and through their involvement in the local community. Young people spend time with their friends, either with staff support and supervision or alone. Young people feel respected and able to develop in confidence whilst living in this home. Robust risk assessments ensure that young people develop skills and confidence and learn socially appropriate behaviours.

Young people feel that the staff team enable them to learn new skills. Highly detailed

and effective independent living plans enable young people to develop skills and confidence. Placing authorities report confidence in the staff team preparing young people very well for the transition to independence. Young people themselves report feeling that they learn how to care for themselves with staff support. Budgeting, shopping and self-care skills enable young people to feel ready for the move from this home. One young person reported 'I am a different and better person than when I moved to this home. I will miss the home, but am ready to move on to independence.'

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and meaningful relationships with the entire staff team. They feel listened to by staff and able to make complaints as necessary. The manager ensures that young people's complaints receive prompt attention. Young people report satisfaction at how any issues they raise are dealt with by the staff team. The manager has devised a young person's plan for the home recently. This sets out specific goals and has clear targets set, including arranging trips and activities for the coming months. Young people's personal statements and comments are not included in the plan at present and do not form part of its review and updating.

Young people attend weekly meetings to share their thoughts and views with staff. This enables them to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. Records of these meetings reflect the discussions held but do not always demonstrate how the manager has responded to their comments formally. Young people feel able to make requests to staff and express their wishes. Young people know that their views will be taken seriously and that staff will try to act on them.

Placement plans for young people set out their needs in great detail. Young people actively contribute to the development of their plans and set goals with staff. Staff record and track all relevant areas of a young person's life on a monthly basis. This provides a very good sense of how young people progress and develop over time. Plans do not currently reflect the inclusion of young people's comments on the progress they make. This would further assist them to understand their starting points and progress made.

Young people have access to a wide range of services to meet their holistic needs. All health needs are met locally and include registration with doctors, dentists and opticians. Young people also receive support from local mental health services, sexual health and dietician services. Some young people access the in-house therapeutic services, as part of the agreed care plan with the placing authorities. Where appropriate, significant family members take part in meetings with relevant professionals, and contribute to the planning of services for their children.

All young people attend educational provisions on a regular basis. Some young people gain qualifications and continue into further education at local colleges. One

young person has achieved a GCSE in English since living in this home and is successfully engaged in a vocational course at a local college. Other young people make good progress educationally from their starting points. For those young people who were not previously attending any educational provision, they now attend every day. If young people refuse to attend, staff ensure that work is done within the home during school times. Young people learn to accept and appreciate the value of education and to learn new things. For those who may not be able to achieve formal qualifications, staff work closely with education providers to promote life skills.

Work experience placements enable young people to increase in confidence and skills. For those young people who may struggle with social interaction, this provides them with good opportunities to meet peers and learn new skills. Young people develop in confidence as a result of imaginative approaches to education. For example, young people have learned skills in areas such as bicycle maintenance. They express a desire to do well and to have aspirations in their lives.

The highly dedicated staff team ensure that young people experience a range of activities. By participating in activities such as fishing, playing pool and skateboarding, young people feel part of the community. It also enables them to develop social interaction skills and increases their confidence. Staff encourage young people to take an active interest in their home and how it is run. Young people contribute to the decoration of their rooms and go shopping with staff to buy things for the home. Staff encourage them to assist in food shopping and to engage in the local community resources as much as possible. Young people therefore, develop confidence and the necessary social skills to assist them in later life.

Staff demonstrate a detailed understanding of the needs of each young person and how they can be met. Young people feel supported and enabled to discuss any issues relating to their cultural background, identity or religious beliefs. Staff work hard to support young people with any identified needs and ensure that specialist services are provided if appropriate. Young people report feeling that staff respect their individuality and support them in relation to their identity and cultural needs. One young person stated that the staff have helped them to feel more secure in relation to their identity and to feel accepted.

The home is furnished and decorated to a good standard. The manager has ensured that identified maintenance and repair works have been completed or are in the process of being completed. Young people have contributed fully to choosing furnishings and colours for their bedrooms. They report pride in their rooms and in contributing to how other rooms in the house have been decorated. Staff actively seek the views of young people when making decisions about the home. Young people feel that the home reflects their views and that their wishes and feelings have been taken into account by the manager. Photographs of young people involved in various activities are on display throughout the home. This adds to the sense of belonging for young people and values their achievements and interests.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report feeling safe living in this home. They feel that staff take seriously any concerns they may have and act on them promptly. Clear policies in relation to bullying ensure that young people understand the consequences of any such behaviour. Close monitoring of any racist behaviour is also in place. Young people who display any such behaviours work with staff in key work sessions to address the concerns and reduce the incidents. Young people's meetings also consider these issues, in order to promote a safe and respectful environment.

There have been no reported incidents of young people going missing from this home since the last inspection. Individual risk assessments ensure that staff know how to respond in any such events. Up-to-date joint protocols with the police further ensure clarity of roles for staff and other agencies. The manager has invited local police officers to visit the home recently. Young people have engaged in discussions about potential risk-taking behaviours and potential police involvement. Young people have a good understanding of the risks to themselves if absent without authority and do not take part in such behaviours. The involvement of the local police by the manager is a real strength of this service.

The recruitment and selection of staff in this home is robust and thorough. This prevents unsuitable adults from being recruited or placing young people at risk of harm. Any allegations made have been dealt with promptly by the manager and staff team. Recording of such incidents is detailed and shows the commitment of the team to ensuring young people's safety at all times. Support is provided to the subject of the allegation throughout the process, as well as to young people. Social workers report confidence in how the manager deals with any such matters. Young people also feel that their concerns are taken seriously and action taken by the manager to promote their safety is appropriate.

The home provides security and safety for young people living there. Given the complex needs of the young people, door alarms are used at night time. The use of alarms is only used following agreement and signed consent from the placing authorities for young people. Young people understand the reason for their use, as this is explained to them on admission to the home. The use of door alarms is also clearly stated in the home's Statement of Purpose.

A range of risk assessments are in place for each young person. They clearly detail and reflect the individual needs of each young person and how those risks will be addressed and met. Whilst the risk assessments reflect the current needs of young people, their updating and reviewing is not always clearly recorded. Care plans provide a detailed sense of the needs of the young people and have been completed in consultation with them. Plans set out the potential risks for each young person and set targets for their reduction. Young people have not recorded their comments about the plans on a regular basis to reflect their contribution and understanding of them.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. The manager is relatively new in post and has submitted an application to Ofsted for approval as the registered manager. The manager has a robust system for ensuring that all complaints made receive prompt and detailed attention. Young people state their confidence in being able to make a complaint about anything of concern. They state total satisfaction with how the manager deals with any complaints they make. The manager has also worked hard to improve relationships with neighbours, meeting with them directly and providing contact details. All complaints received have been dealt with to the total satisfaction of the complainant.

The home demonstrates a real capacity for improvement. The manager has implemented new systems and plans for the home, to ensure that it continues to improve and meet the needs of young people. The implementation of a young person's development plan evidences the commitment of the manager to their inclusion. The manager has completed an annual self-assessment, which has informed areas of the home's overall development plan. The development plan is detailed and has clear and achievable objectives. The plan has not been subject to a review or update as yet by the manager, neither has the children's development plan. No requirements or recommendations were made as a result of the previous inspection of this home.

The manager undertakes detailed quality assurance monitoring of the home's performance each month and produces very good reports. The manager fully takes into account the comments made by the independent person who visits the home every month. Their reports and action plans reflect the close working relationship with the manager to ensuring continued improvements.

Sufficient staff provide very good care for the young people living in this home. New staff undertake a probationary period on appointment and undertake all necessary induction training. High levels of supervision and training ensure that they feel supported and competent in their roles. One new member of staff stated 'I love this job and could not be happier.' Use of agency staff is only used as a last resort. The manager is committed to ensuring that the home is run by a committed, dedicated and well-trained workforce.

Records relating to young people reflect their current needs and how these will be met by the staff team. The voice of young people is evident throughout and demonstrates the commitment of the manager to ensuring their inclusion. The manager ensures that all looked-after reviews take place in a timely manner and has good systems in place to monitor and oversee this process. Robust and meaningful independence plans provide young people with the skills need to make a successful transition into adult life.

The manager considers all significant events and ensures that notifications are made to all relevant agencies. The staff team demonstrate a detailed understanding of

their roles in relation to safeguarding young people. Staff feel confident in applying all relevant policies and procedures, including whistleblowing and safeguarding procedures. Weekly team meetings take place, with the manager ensuring that the staff team reviews progress made by young people and considers any changes to legislation.

The manager has worked hard to improve relationships with neighbours and to ensure that young people feel engaged in their local community. Young people feel part of their home and community. One young person stated their desire to remain living in the area when they moved out of this home, having formed meaningful attachments in the local community.

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.