

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC064472
Inspection date	11/08/2011
Inspector	Sharron Escott
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/03/2011
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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

The home is registered to provide care for up to four girls between 11 and under 17 years of age and who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home operates a small-holding with vegetable and fruit gardens. A number of animals are kept including horses, chickens, ducks, pigs, sheep, and various small companion animals, including house cats.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people enjoy a good standard of care in a supportive environment; most appear confident and self assured. The staff demonstrate a commitment to young people, clearly understand their varying needs and pay attention to these, allowing and encouraging young people to develop meaningful productive relationships with mutual respect and trust.

There are good systems in place to protect and promote young people's health, welfare and emotional well-being. There is evidence that they make good progress in relation to their starting point on arrival. Young people say that they feel safe and listened to at the home and report they are not subject to any bullying. Staffing levels are good and the stable staff team work well together which has a positive impact on young people.

One previous recommendation has been met and the Registered Manager now ensures that the home is in receipt of placing authority care plans for all young people. A second recommendation to ensure that a written record of young people's views on restraint and sanctions are recorded in the home has not yet been complied with. This recommendation has been reinstated.

Areas identified for improvement at this inspection are: involving children in the monitoring processes of the home, seriously taking their views, wishes and feelings and any concerns into account; ensuring any sanctions are clear, reasonable and fair and provide the young people with the opportunity to learn and reflect on their behaviour; the staffing rotas do not currently inform young people who is the responsible shift leader and the times dedicated for handovers.

Positive feedback has been received from young people, parents and placing authorities in relation to the care and support that is provided at the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanctions for behaviour are clear, reasonable and fair (NMS 3.8)
- ensure where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, young people are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept in the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure staff rotas have time scheduled so that handovers can be held involving those who are placed in charge at particular times (NMS 17.6)
- ensure young people in the home are regularly involved in contributing to monitoring the operation of the home, and their views any concerns are seriously taken into account. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

The home provides a nurturing environment in which young people make good progress in relation to their starting points on arrival. Staff work with professionals within the organisation, and external agencies to address young people's individual needs and promote their physical and emotional well-being. The staff team are clearly experienced and successful in working with children and young people who display challenging behavioural needs.

Young people enjoy excellent health and their needs are identified, supported and addressed. Individual needs are documented within placement plans. The staff team are proactive in identifying and attempting to secure the services of specialist professionals in order to improve the quality of young people's health and emotional well-being.

Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage healthy eating and regular exercise. Young people are able to choose the food they eat. Meals are taken around the table and provide opportunities to enjoy a social occasion whilst developing self help and independence skills.

Young people are enrolled and attend full-time education. Education plans and individual learning plans are tailored to meet the level of understanding and ability of the young people. The home promotes consistent communication between the school and the home. Key workers have a good understanding of young people's educational needs and work in partnership with the school to ensure that needs are effectively reviewed and there is a consistent approach to meeting targets.

Young people enjoy an extensive range of activities both in the home and out in the

community. This gives the young people opportunities to develop social skills and increase interaction with their peers and others. It is evident that children and young people feel confident and secure with the staff and this enables them to try new opportunities and experiences to increase their self-esteem. A young person stated, 'since living at this home I have had lots of opportunities that I have not had anywhere else. I really enjoy horse riding and caring for the animals'.

The home works in partnership with families and significant others to ensure that young people maintain positive and frequent contact. A strength of the service is managing restricted or potentially difficult contacts arrangements in a sensitive way, ensuring young people are given a high level of support.

The staff team are committed to providing children and young people with an individualised care and support package designed to focus on their achievements and abilities to enable them to reach their full potential. It is evident that young people have made good progress in managing their own behaviour, increasing social skills and making safer choices. These skills have promoted young people's self-esteem and have enabled them to feel more confident.

Families and social workers are delighted with the professionalism of the staff and the progress that young people have made and cannot speak more highly of the service.

Quality of care

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

Young people thrive within this nurturing and supportive environment; they feel able to raise any worry which they may have directly with staff and are confident that their concern will be given due consideration. Group and individual work with young people helps them to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes on every occasion. The culture within the home of open discussion about current events provides young people with opportunities to explore their thoughts and identify any prejudices that they may hold. Staff encourage young people to embrace diversity by sharing their differing personal perspectives and by showing their tolerance and acceptance of differing views.

Young people benefit from a competent and enthusiastic staff team who are able to provide innovative care and support in their placement. Relationships between staff and young people are observed to be friendly, positive and good natured with lots of humour. Staff have high aspirations for each young person in all aspects of their lives, irrespective of the challenges that they present; young people respond positively to the home's expectations of them. Care practices are tailored to effectively meet individual needs while also taking into account the needs of the group. The home encourages young people to take part in a wide range of activities of their choosing. Staff work flexibly and dynamically and respond promptly to young people's presenting needs; achievements are praised and celebrated and mistakes are accepted and discussed with young people in key-worker meetings which helps

them learn from their errors of judgement.

The accommodation provides a pleasant, warm and comfortable home that young people enjoy living in. There are ample reception rooms to allow young people to engage in house activities that include the use of consoles and board games within a room dedicated for reading, art work and relaxation. Furnishings and décor are of a high standard and there is an ongoing development plan for further improvements to the service and learning opportunities for the young people within the outdoor areas. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to their own tastes.

The home is surrounded by fields and outbuildings that house a range of animals and provides ample opportunity for outside activities and leisure interests. Young people are encouraged to be involved in developing an area to grow fruit and vegetables as well as care for a range of animals.

The home has been proactive in inviting the local community police to visit socially, enabling the young people to build up some positive relationships and have a better understanding of the law and the role of the police.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has good systems in place to ensure that children and young people's welfare is protected and promoted. Young people stated they feel safe and secure within the home and during activities supervised by the staff team. Bullying is not perceived as an issue within the home although staff are quick to identify any areas of concern such as inappropriate comments. Staff's approach to behaviour is based on redirection and purposeful intervention to quickly calm any heated situation.

Young people enjoy sound relationships and generally interact positively with staff and others. Young people say they get along with most of the care staff. Care staff set clear boundaries which sufficiently help young people to understand the consequences for their behaviour. However the frequent use of sanctions, predominately financial reparations, indicates that these are not effective or individualised to meet the needs of the young people. Staff regularly discuss the behavioural approaches during team meetings and handovers and agree as a team how to respond to young people.

All visitors to the home are monitored because they are required to provide evidence of their identity and to sign a visitor's book. These systems protect young people as they ensure that unauthorised individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

The environment is physically safe and appropriately secure, taking account of the needs and characteristics of the young people cared for. The home is comfortable and homely. All young people have their own individual rooms which promotes their right to privacy and personal space. Staff manage health and safety well. This is underpinned by policies, procedures and training that alerts staff to their roles and

levels of responsibility. As a result, young people benefit from a safe environment and this has a positive impact upon their welfare.

Care staff receive regular safeguarding training and concerns about the welfare of young people are managed appropriately. The Registered Manager is the designated person with responsibility for managing safeguarding concerns and provides a good source of knowledge and support.

Restraint records are detailed and clarify that the least restrictive intervention is used and only as a last resort to keep young people safe.

A missing from home protocol has been established that will help safeguard all young people in placement when they are missing from home.

Detailed risk assessments and fire safety checks are undertaken to promote safety and well-being.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed by a suitably qualified and experienced manager who has the support and respect of the staff team. Senior staff keep up to date with new information and legislation and this is shared with the team through regular meetings. Staff talk positively about the support they receive and confirm that supervision, appraisal and team meetings are carried out on a regular basis and enables them to reflect on their practice and relationships with young people. It is evident that staff access good quality training that enhances individual skills, and keeps them up to date with professional and legal developments.

The home has a detailed Statement of Purpose that outlines the services it offers, this is regularly reviewed. This is accessible to the young people, parents and social workers. The young persons guide is detailed and age appropriate, however it but lacks additional information for young people on staying safe and cyber bullying.

The home is resourced well to ensure young people have good staffing ratios. The staffing rota does not identify specific times for handovers or what member of staff is leading the shift, resulting in young people not always being clear which member of staff can authorise any changes within their daily living plan.

Staffing levels are good and the staff team work together to cover any gaps in the rota to ensure young people receive consistent care. In the manager's absence the team are supported by a deputy who is a suitably experienced shift supervisor. Staff are clear about their individual and collective responsibilities and demonstrate an effective and efficient approach to their work resulting in an organised and well managed home which provides a stable environment for the young people.

Staff undertake induction, regulatory and service specific training which provides

them with skills, knowledge and competencies required to meet the needs of the young people: this has included specific training in child development.

There is a strong commitment from the responsible person, managers, and the staff team to ensure that the home meets the needs of the young person. Staff receive regular supervision and team meetings, this enables them to reflect on their practice and relationships with the young people. Staff members refer to themselves as a strong experienced team who are well supported by management.

There are good monitoring activities related to the quality of care provided to young people. For example, the manager regularly monitors the quality of care given to young people and any emerging patterns and trends. Monthly visits by a designated person have also been occurring. However, the manager is not overtly using internal and external feedback to proactively help shape the service. For example, feedback from placing authorities, parents and young people is extremely good but there is no real evidence in the home about how this positive feedback is being used to improve the outcomes for young people.

The home's office is well organised, information is kept up to date and professional recording are made. Records are held securely in a locked office.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.