

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC064472
Inspection date	31/10/2013
Inspector	Jim Palmer
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/02/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by a private organisation and is registered to provide care for up to four young women with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home operates a smallholding 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.

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**.

This service achieves good outcomes for young people. The home is well managed and the staff team work hard to meet the needs of young people living in the home. Staff provide consistent high quality care and the excellent relationships with young people are based on mutual trust and an open dialogue between staff and young people. Young people develop a very close bond with staff.

Staff are enthusiastic and highly motivated toward improving the impact living in the home has on young people. Young people's highly individual needs are well identified and staff are committed to working with young people to meet them. This is a strength of the service.

The home provides a structured, yet nurturing environment in which young people thrive and make significant progress.

This home is judged overall as good.

Areas identified for improvement include, to ensure that the effectiveness of safeguarding training for staff is reviewed, to ensure that all staff are confident about the referral process and to ensure that any restrictions placed on young people's communications with others is only limited as a result to safeguarding concerns. .

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- review the effectiveness of safeguarding training to ensure that all staff understand what they must do if they have concerns about the safety of a young person. Specifically with regard to young people missing from home and the risk of child exploitation. (National minimum standard 20 (1))
- ensure that any restrictions on communication with others namely mobile telephones, are only made to protect the child from significant risk to their safety or welfare. (National Minimum Standard 9.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Outcomes for young people in this service are good. Young people are supported by staff in developing a very strong understanding of their personal backgrounds and what they are seeking to achieve whilst they are living in the home. This is achieved in regular one to one key-working meetings. Young people confirm that they can confidently discuss personal concerns with staff and the manager. By developing trusting relationships with staff, young people's self-confidence and esteem flourishes. Most young people significantly improve their skills in negotiating with others and being able to respect other people's point of view even when they do not necessarily agree with them. This improves relationships with family members and increases their ability to make successful life choices. Most young people say that their behaviour has improved significantly since living in the home and they feel more confident and assertive as a result. The home creates a very warm emotional environment in which young people are valued and respected this promotes young people's ability to manage conflict in a mature and less confrontational manner. Staff strike a very good balance between setting a calm relaxed atmosphere yet having high expectations of young people and setting firm boundaries in which young people feel safe and secure.

Young people speak enthusiastically about living in the home and confirm that they are fully consulted about the day to day running of the home. However, some young people do not always feel their views are always fully considered, for example at times they believe that their access to their own mobile phones is limited for reasons other than personal safety.

Young people's health needs are very well met by the staff. Young people are encouraged to take greater personal responsibility for maintaining their own good health by making healthy lifestyle choices. Staff provide guidance and information for young people on encouraging good diet, exercise and a reduction in risk taking

behaviour. Young people say that their health needs are fully met, both physically and emotionally. They are able to exercise choice in accessing a wide range of health professionals. Medicines are safely stored and administered, young people are encouraged to manage their own medicines where it is safe for them to do so.

Most young people's school attendance has improved considerably since living in the home. Young people are making good progress in school and liaison between school and home is good. Staff attend school events, such as sports days, school shows and fetes in support of young people. If young people do not attend school for any reason, staff are pro-active in seeking ways of encouraging them back into to school. Young people are generally making good progress in school and in most cases this exceeds expectation. Family members and placing social workers have commented on the progress young people make in school, particularly some who have a history of non-school attendance.

All young people have highly individualised placement plans and all staff have a sound knowledge of their backgrounds. Young people are fully engaged in their placement planning and feel confident about expressing their wishes. Placement reviews take place regularly; the home is pro-active in ensuring that meetings take place within appropriate timescales.

All young people are expected to contribute to the day to day housekeeping tasks and each young person is encouraged to prepare and cook a group meal once a week. In addition to contributing to the daily running of the home, young people are expected to participate in the husbandry of a number of animals that are kept in the garden and out buildings. Most, though not all, young people enjoy the responsibility of caring for the animals. Young people attend community groups such as St John ambulance and contribute as volunteers at a riding centre for disabled people. There is a wide range of community based leisure activities available for young people to participate in.

Staff promote contact with young people's families in accordance with the placing authority care plan. Family members are very positive about the manner in which they are welcomed by staff when they visit. They say that staff are very relaxed and friendly, yet set appropriate boundaries for young people. Families comment positively about the progress that young people make whilst living in the home. Whilst progress is monitored by managers, the service is developing systems for more effective measuring of outcomes for young people.

Quality of care

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

The quality of service provided to young people is good, with some outstanding areas of practice. All young people are given numerous opportunities to comment on the quality of the service and the day to day running of the home. They participate in regular house meetings, one to one key worker meetings, their views are sought as part of placement reviews and feedback forms are made available to young people

and their families. Consultation with young people is good; however despite this some young people are unclear about how much they are able to influence the house rules, for example, the policy on mobile phone use. Young people are able to choose the colour of décor for their bedrooms and they all say they are happy with their bedrooms and the décor and furnishings, throughout the home.

A strength of the service is the quality of relationships that exists between young people and staff. Relationships are based on mutual respect and trust. Young people value very highly the relationships they are able to build with their key workers and all staff members. Staff challenge any unacceptable behaviour and retain the young person's interests at all time. Young people thrive as a result of the consistent high quality care they receive from staff. This is an area of outstanding practice.

All young people say that they knew how to raise any concerns they had about the service and are confident that they would be listened and treated seriously. Young people also say that most minor issues can be resolved quickly and easily through an open exchange of views. Most young people acknowledge that since living in the home they are able to resolve more maturely and effectively than was previously the case.

Placement planning and review are good. Staff are very knowledgeable of the individual plan for each young person. The home operates a key-worker system, however all staff are very aware of each child's individual plan. All young people are encouraged to attend their placement reviews and contribute to the plan. Young people agree they are fully involved in their placement planning and review. The staff and manager are very pro-active in chasing missing pre-placement information from placing local authorities, and did so during this inspection.

All young people have detailed individual health plans; these reflect the wishes and preferences of young people. Young people are able to readily access a wide range of health services including specialist psychological and emotional support. Staff are well supported and trained to meet specific physical and emotional needs. Support and training is available to staff from a clinical psychologist to enable them to work effectively with young people, however some staff say that whilst they understand the need to respect confidentiality of information, they feel communication could be improved.

Young people's attendance at school is promoted by the expectation of school attendance. Staff support young people by transporting them to school and liaising regularly with the education staff. Staff show a keen interest in each young person's educational progress and celebrate all achievements. As a result most young people make good progress in school and some undertake external college courses.

Young people confirm that the staff respond appropriately when managing challenging behaviours. They say that they are given to opportunity to discuss their behaviour and consider alternative methods of resolving conflict. Young people think the sanctions used are fair and proportionate. Sanctions are rarely used in the home, young people are expected to make a contribution to the cost of repairing or

replacing damaged items, they are expected to try to 'put things right' with the offended party. Staff are trained in the use of physical restraint, and are all aware that this is used only as a last resort. The record of restraints has no entries since the last inspection; it is however regularly audited by the manager and visiting manager.

The quality of the home environment is excellent and is enjoyed by each young person. The home has a large homely, well decorated and furnished country farm house atmosphere. It is located in a quiet rural setting in a large wood. The home has a large amount of land, numerous out-buildings, a large number of animals including, horses, chicken, and other small farmyard animals. Most young people enjoy caring for the animals and this is part of the home's therapeutic style of working. Young people say that the home and gardens provide space for reflection reducing the need to go absent from the home.

Most young people are very positive about their home and their achievements made since living there.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people's safety is promoted by good safe care practice and effective policies regarding young people being absent without authority. Young people say they feel safe living in the home and say that the staff work hard to promote their safety. They are provided with advice and guidance on how to promote their own safety and are encouraged to consider the impact of risk taking behaviour. Staff are particularly skilled in this area of work. This includes providing guidance on keeping safe when using computers and mobile telephones. Young people's safety is further promoted by well-established good safe care practice which is practiced by all staff members. All young people have individual risk assessments and there are effective risk assessments for the environment, equipment and activities.

The home has regular health and safety checks of electrical equipment and gas installations. There are regular fire drills and all staff receive first aid and fire safety training.

The home has robust safeguarding policies and a protocol in place with the local police should young people be missing from home. Staff receive regular training in safeguarding and have received some training in child sexual exploitation. Despite this not all staff are confident about how the protocol should be implemented. The home is asked to review the effectiveness of its safeguarding training.

The home has good links with local authority designated officers and safeguarding teams. One safeguarding referral has been made since the last inspection. There are robust systems in place for ensuring safe practice in staff recruitment. All visitors to the home are recorded in a visitor's book and any unchecked visitor is suitably chaperoned.

Leadership and management

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

The manager provides good leadership and direction to staff. Young people benefit from living in a well-managed home in which there are clear expectations about outcomes for young people and staff practice. The manager and staff are highly motivated and clearly committed to raise the quality of care for young people. As a result outcomes for young people are good.

The manager has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service. There is an effective service development plan in place and the managers set high but achievable targets for young people and staff. Monitoring of the service is good, new systems have been introduced to ensure that monitoring visits are conducted by external consultants, rather than visiting managers. This is in response to a previous requirement. Whilst this requirement has been fully acted upon, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the changes. The home has a good track record of learning from previous inspection reports.

Each of the previous recommendations and requirements has been addressed. The second requirement arising from the previous inspection was to ensure that all young people's records held all of the background information required from the placing authority. There is good evidence to support that missing information is robustly sought by the home, including contacting senior managers in the placing authority. The home has introduced a new system of undertaking the monitoring visits under Regulation 33. The home has also introduced monitoring systems to ensure that all staff complete the Children's Workforce Development Council induction standards within six months. Most staff have met that target, where this has not occurred it is as a result of long term illness or absence not as a result of inactivity by the service. Therefore the recommendation is judged as met.

The service is effectively monitored by the manager and monthly reviews of the quality of care are produced by the manager and are submitted to Ofsted. The manager and director agreed to summarise the monthly reports into twice yearly reviews for submission to Ofsted and are in the process of implementing this change. This includes a system for measuring the impact that living at the home is having on young people. These statistics will enable the service to continue to improve outcomes for young people.

Staff are highly motivated and committed to raising standards of care and of promoting the interests of young people.

The Statement of Purpose accurately describes the service provided and young people confirm that they are given helpful information about the home when they arrive at the home. This information is available in alternative formats if required by young people or their families either prior to admission or shortly after. Information is displayed clearly for young people about how to raise any concern and who to

contact outside of the service if they have a concern.

There are sufficient well trained and supported staff to meet the needs of the young people. Staff are provided with a comprehensive on-going post induction training programme. Staff are also offered professional development if they wish and are offered specific training opportunities on request. Staff receive detailed induction and have to successfully complete a probationary period. All staff including the manager receive regular supervision and annual appraisal. Children and young people benefit from being looked after by a well-trained and supervised staff team.

All significant events are reported to the appropriate services, in a timely manner

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.