

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065780
Inspection date	20/12/2013
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	10/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2013

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 children's home cares for up to three children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is owned and managed by a private limited company.

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 home provides high quality care to young people through a stable and well supported staff team. A competent and knowledgeable registered manager leads the staff team and effectively manages and monitors the conduct of the home.

Positive behaviour management strategies enable young people to develop self-control and self-worth. There have been no restraints, very few sanctions and no children missing from home since the last inspection. Young people's challenging behaviour and risk taking significantly reduce and they feel safe in the home.

Young people make very good progress in all areas of their development and professionals agree that young people benefit enormously from the quality of the relationships they develop with staff. Comments from professionals include, 'Excellent care', 'They're fantastic', 'They provide really good emotional support'.

The capacity to improve is good. The home routinely addresses recommendations made in provider monitoring reports and takes action to improve. One requirement and three recommendations made following the last inspection have been addressed but one of the recommendations has only been partially met. The six monthly review of reports about the conduct of the home do not demonstrate how improvements are made to the quality of care.

Some shortfalls have been identified. Not all staff are trained in child protection and this undermines their ability to deal effectively with a disclosure of abuse. Plans are in place for this training to take place in the near future. Young people who are admitted to the home at short notice do not receive the children's guide until they

arrive. This means the opportunity to reduce their anxieties and allay their fears about moving home is missed. The back door has become swollen in the wet weather and is sticking. It is a potential risk to young people's safety as this is a fire exit.

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 that all persons employed receive appropriate training. In particular, that staff receive training in child protection. (Regulation 27 (4)(a))	31/01/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that unless an emergency placement makes it impossible, children are given information before their arrival at the home, in a format appropriate to their age and understanding, including photographs where appropriate (NMS 11.3)
- ensure that hazards to young people's safety are removed or avoided. In particular, ensure the back door can be easily opened to facilitate an emergency exit (Volume 5, statutory guidance, paragraph 2.64)
- ensure that any six monthly review of monitoring reports identifies any concerns about specific incidents, any patterns and trends and any action taken to address issues raised and improve the quality of care. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in developing a positive self-view and emotional resilience. Their health is as good as can be, given their particular and long term health problems. They receive the care, treatment and medicines they need to improve their physical health and well-being. For example, they receive orthodontic treatment and have regular appointments with specialist health consultants. This ensures their good health is promoted. Young people who are temporarily sick are

well looked after by staff and make a speedy recovery. Young people know about key health risks and their risk taking behaviours significantly reduce. No young people smoke, take drugs or use alcohol.

Young people have excellent school attendance and achieve well. They make progress to catch up or exceed their predicted grades. They complete their homework with support and supervision from staff. They receive additional support in school in accordance with effective personal education planning. Close liaison between the social worker, home and school ensures their progress continues to be good.

Young people participate in activities with staff and each other. Through this, they develop skills in social interaction, a sense of fun and general knowledge. They enjoy shopping and trips out with staff and visiting friends. They routinely maintain email and phone contact with their friends and family and have visits to and from them. This ensures they maintain a sense of their own identity and keep in contact with all significant people.

Professionals report that young people make exceptional progress in a nurturing environment. They say this is 'a really good children's home' and recognise that young people's emotional well-being significantly improves as a result of the high quality relationships they have with staff.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from positive and constructive relationships with a stable and consistent staff team. Communication between young people and staff is a key strength of the home. Young people feel that staff care about them and keep them safe. They have no complaints. Consultation with young people is very good. They say they are listened to and are able to influence the running of the home. A young person gave an example of how staff have altered the routines of the home to meet their needs. Young people know why staff cannot always act upon their wishes and accept this.

Staff are fully committed to the young people in their care and place their safety and well-being at the heart of their practice. Young people are fully involved in decisions about their lives and in their own placement plans. The staff team know young people well and consistently meet their individual needs. Effective communication between staff ensures that they are completely up to date with young people's changing plans and needs. A social worker explained, 'Staff have a very good understanding of their vulnerabilities and needs'.

Staff have high aspirations for young people and take action to challenge barriers to achievement. For example, through informal support with maths, staff successfully assist young people to increase their attainment levels. Their interventions and good advice help young people to improve their social skills and develop more age

appropriate and meaningful relationships.

The staff team work exceptionally well with other professionals who describe the quality of care as 'outstanding'. One said, 'They provide a fantastic level of support.' This view was echoed by other professionals.

The home helps young people to raise their awareness of other cultures and ethnic groups through regular and enjoyable 'cultural evenings'. Young people have access to a computer and the home takes action to ensure their on-line safety. The computer has recently broken but another one has been ordered and is due to arrive within days.

Young people who are admitted at short notice do not have access to information about the home prior to placement. Although the children's guide is available electronically, this is not always shared with them to help allay their anxieties about moving to a home they have not been able to visit.

The home promotes and facilitates contact very well, supervising and reporting on contact arrangements as required by placing authorities. This ensures that contact is arranged in a way that benefits young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home relies on positive behaviour strategies and rewards to encourage young people to reduce their anti-social and risk taking behaviour. Young people successfully develop self-control and good manners. Young people occasionally receive sanctions and consider these are fair. The home does not use restraint. Serious incidents causing concern are rare.

Young people significantly reduce their risk-taking behaviours. They make good progress towards eliminating self-harming behaviour through effective engagement with staff and other professionals. Young people who have gone missing from previous placements no longer put themselves at risk in this way. Risk assessments effectively guide staff to enable young people to take appropriate risks in accordance with their age and development. One young person said, 'They have restrictions that keep me safe, like going out on my own only for one hour'.

Some staff have completed extensive training in Child Exploitation and On-line Protection and are very aware of the need for internet safety. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the dangers associated with being missing from care, including child sexual exploitation. These are not currently issues of concern at this home.

Not all staff have had training in child protection and some are not fully aware of how to manage a disclosure or allegation of abuse. This means that young people who disclose abuse may be put at risk of contamination of evidence because staff

are not clear about how to gather and report evidence appropriately. Plans are in place for this training to go ahead in January 2014.

Young people have a strong sense of safety and recognise the actions that staff take to keep them safe. One said, 'I used to get scared in other places but I feel safe here.' The wooden back door, which is a fire exit, has swollen because of recent damp whether and is sticking. This could impede fast exit in the event of an emergency.

Leadership and management

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

The home is well managed and monitored by a competent and knowledgeable registered manager who keeps up to date with changes in legislation and guidance. He supports the staff team well through regular supervisions and effective team meetings in which young people's needs are central to discussions. He enables staff to develop their skills through giving them appropriate levels of responsibility, including liaison with other professionals and report writing.

Staff have a range of skills that enable them to care for young people very well. Those who are not suitably qualified on joining the staff team quickly engage in a qualification programme and time is made available for its completion. This assists new staff to develop the skills they need to provide good quality care. However, not all staff have completed training in first aid, behaviour management and food hygiene. The impact of this has been minimal.

A new independent visitor has been appointed to review the operation of the home each month. This provides a comprehensive overview of the conduct of the home and helps the registered manager to identify and address any shortfalls. The registered manager monitors the home's records and completes reports on the quality of care each month. Monitoring reports are forwarded to HMCI every six months. The reports do not demonstrate how monitoring leads to improvements in the quality of care. However, the registered manager understands the strengths and weaknesses of the home and the impact of the home on young people's lives. There is very good evidence that the home makes a significant difference to young people's lives. One social worker said, 'It's the happiest I've seen her in a long time' and another said, 'There is a massive difference in her since she was admitted'.

The requirement and recommendations from the last inspection have been mostly addressed. This had led to improvements in the children's guide and the notifications procedure. Reports demonstrating monitoring by the registered manager and the independent visitor are regularly forwarded to HMCI in accordance with regulations and this assists the regulator to effectively monitor and risk assess the operation of the home in between inspections.

The home is well maintained and provides young people with homely, comfortable accommodation that meets their needs.

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.