

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065789
Inspection date	10/12/2013
Inspector	Marian Denny
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/03/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 is a privately owned children's home registered for three young people with emotional or 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**.

A dedicated staff team ensures young people receive good care and support. Young people make good progress in relation to the starting point of their placements. They benefit from being cared for by staff, who are very child focused and totally committed to ensuring the young people living in the home achieve their true potential.

Young people enjoy and benefit from trusting relationships with staff. Staff recognise the importance of building strong relationships with young people and see it as the key to the success of their work. This enables young people to positively engage with staff and in turn brings improvement and better outcomes in their lives.

Young people's individual needs and interests are actively promoted and celebrated. Young people say that they thoroughly enjoy living in the home. Staff support young people extremely well, recognise the importance of keeping them safe and give this a high priority. Young people's risk taking behaviour has been dramatically reduced and they are protected from harm by staff, who have good training in safeguarding young people. All young people said that they enjoy excellent relationships with staff and are very safe and happy living in the home.

Professionals consulted with about the service are very positive about the standard of care provided to young people and express no concerns. Positive leadership and management and increased internal monitoring ensure young people get the best opportunities to improve their life chances.

Areas for development relate to staff's awareness of the government's guidance

regarding the restriction of liberty and also relates to the current guidance in relation to the home's missing from home policy.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are aware of current legislation and government guidance, with specific reference to the home's missing from home policy (NMS 5.2)
- ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within or from the home are not used unless it is necessary to safeguard young people and promote their welfare and development. Such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents, Such restrictions for one child do not impose similar restrictions on other children. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress in the home. They benefit from a very child-focused environment provided by an extremely caring and committed staff team. Consequently, they develop good relationships with staff, trust them and feel safe and secure. Young people feel that they are listened to and are able to discuss any concerns with staff. Consequently, no young person currently living in the home has needed to make a formal complaint.

Young people's wishes and feelings are actively sought. This takes place through general discussions, young people's meetings and through individual one-to-one sessions. Staff members routinely consult young people on all aspects of their care including care planning and changes in the home, for example, menu planning, education, family contact and activities.

Young people all have designated key workers with whom they have regular discussions, both on an informal basis and in one-to-one sessions. Discussions are thorough and honest. This enables young people to gain a good understanding of their background and the reasons why they are in care. As a result, young people begin to develop emotional resilience and their self-esteem and confidence steadily increases. Staff encourage and support this through praising and celebrating young people's individual achievements. Gradually, young people make progress in all aspects of their development. For example, they are making positive choices not to get involved in criminal and risky behaviour.

Young people not only benefit from the good relationships established with staff, but also their tutors, teachers and other professionals. This helps them in their school

work and other achievements. All young people, who have been in placement for over six months, have increased their educational attendance and progress. Staff work consistently to breakdown any identified barriers to young people's education. This supports young people to make good educational attainment. In addition, the home has the services of an educational psychologist who can help young people experiencing problems in the educational setting improve their learning and educational attainments.

Young people have good access to a range of health professionals to meet their emotional and physical needs. They enjoy good physical health and the food provided in the home is nutritious and well-balanced. Young people understand the benefits of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and take part in activities that keep them fit and healthy. For example, they are involved in local youth clubs, play football, go swimming and enjoy going for walks. There is also a range of board games and a range of consoles, as well as games equipment in the home for young people to access.

Young people develop their self-care and independent living skills in line with their age and level of ability. For example, they learn to budget, shop and cook for themselves. This means that they are developing the vital skills they will need in their futures.

Young people's progress is evaluated on a regular basis through daily handovers, staff meetings and supervision. This ensures staff are fully aware of the young person's progress at a particular point in time. It also enables staff to determine the precise work that needs to be undertaken to ensure the progress is at the very least maintained and ideally improved upon. This process ensures staff have a very detailed knowledge and understanding of the young person and can therefore make a really significant contribution at their statutory review.

Young people develop or maintain positive relationships with people who are important to them. As a result, they have a clear sense of their identity and develop support networks that will be useful to them in their future lives.

All the young people were spoken with during the inspection and stated that they are, 'very happy' in the home. Comments from young people included, 'it's great here', 'I like living in this home, it's fun, 'Staff really listen to me as they care.' They all like their personalised bedrooms, with one young person describing their room as a 'penthouse suite'. All said they were able to choose their meals and they enjoyed them.

Quality of care

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

Staff develop and sustain extremely positive and constructive relationships with young people living at the home.

They provide young people with highly individualised care, which very effectively addresses their unique individual needs and personal preferences. Their wishes and feelings are always taken into account regarding all aspects of their care and positively acted upon, unless this is not in their best interests. This includes complex decisions such as educational and contact arrangements. This reinforces to young people that their opinions really matter and are highly valued, so increasing their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people fully understand why they are currently living at the home and are involved in their future care plans. They are also supported to set their own realistic, yet challenging targets and positively engage with staff to achieve this.

Young people are encouraged to demonstrate socially acceptable behaviour. Individual behaviour management plans supported by comprehensive risk assessments identify triggers for negative behaviour and effective strategies for positive behaviour management. This helps young people to understand their individual circumstances and take positive steps to make the necessary changes in their lives. Daily incentives and rewards systems encourage young people's participation and have proved to be successful. Consequently, sanctions are not used very often. However when they are used, they are appropriate and assist young people to accept the consequence of their behaviour.

Young people fully engage in the young people's meetings. There are frequent individual key worker sessions with young people. In these one-to-one sessions, relevant and highly sensitive issues are fully explored. Similarly, these issues are also addressed in the young person's statutory reviews. Young people always have a choice of meals and activities, which they can participate in and they can also negotiate sanctions which are imposed.

Staff have consistently high aspirations for all the young people in the home and are highly successful advocates for them. Recent examples of this, includes enabling children to return to school and supporting good quality family contact. This has resulted in the young people being much happier, more settled and making progress in various aspects of their lives.

Staff place a real emphasis on young people's education and encourage good school attendance. They work very hard to support young people to make good educational progress and obtain qualifications. Consequently, staff are usually very successful in helping young people achieve their full potential and develop future aspirations.

Staff also actively promote young people's health and well-being and encourage them to lead healthy lifestyles. This includes taking an active part in menu planning, engaging in activities and attending health appointments. All annual health assessments and routine health check-ups are up-to-date. There are also robust arrangements in place for the storage, administration and recording of medicines. This ensures young people are receiving their prescribed medication in accordance with the doctor's instructions.

Staff are extremely child focussed and totally committed to all the young people in the home. A key strength of this home is that staff know the young people in their care exceedingly well. They also work in close partnership with young people, their placing social workers and their parents. This ensures that the individual care needs of the young person living at the home are known and are addressed in their individual care arrangements. Regular meetings are organised to review the effectiveness of their care plans. Young people attend these meetings and can give their views directly to the social care professionals involved in meeting their care needs.

Social care professionals and parents are asked what they think about the service and how it might improve. Professionals were highly complimentary about the quality of care provided at this home. They also stated that there was extremely good communication between them and confirmed that any matters raised were responded to very quickly. Some professionals stated that, 'Staff cannot do enough for the young people in the home.'

The professionals spoken with confirmed that the young people were happy and their needs were being well met. They also stated that young people receive good support to maintain contact with family and friends as agreed in their care plans. One parent commented that her child, 'receives excellent care' and said, 'I would not mind living in the home.' Parents spoken with also said that staff communicated very well with them and that they were always kept up-to-date on every aspect of their child's life. Another parent said that 'Staff are very welcoming and the care provided to my son is fab.'

Young people know how to complain. Information regarding the complaints system is provided in a variety of the home's literature, including the young people's guide. Procedures for managing complaints ensure they are handled in an objective manner and investigated by the manager or if necessary, by an external nominated person.

Young people benefit from an excellent standard of accommodation. The home is tastefully decorated and furnished. Young people really like their personalised bedrooms and have photos of themselves around the home. Young people genuinely take pride in the home as demonstrated by their involvement in routine household tasks and on-going improvements. The location of the home provides young people with access to a range of recreational activities and range of local community facilities.

Visitors to the home particularly highlight the extremely welcoming atmosphere created by the staff and young people. Comments included, 'The home is really lovely and it is always clean and tidy.' 'There is a really warm, friendly and homely atmosphere in the home, whenever I visit.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say that the home is an extremely safe place to live and they are protected from harm. Staff keep young people's safety at the forefront of their practice and they are trained in safeguarding. They are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse, including issues in relation to young people's personal circumstances, and they know what they need to do to protect young people. Consequently, young people are protected from bullying and they all said, 'No bullying happens here.'

Young people particularly benefit from the clear routines and consistent boundaries in place. They also enjoy excellent relationships with the staff and feel really comfortable talking to any of them about highly sensitive issues. Consequently, they have made good progress in expressing their emotions and this has helped them make progress in other aspects of their development. Personalised behaviour management strategies are used. These contain good, individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour.

Young people in this home do not go missing. There are though good staffing levels and risk management plans in place to prevent this from happening. The clear risk assessments in place are recorded to help staff understand what action to take to minimise identified risks. Risk assessments are shared with young people and this develops young people's understanding and the reasons adults are concerned. Staff ensure plans for young people's safety are consistently put into practice and address young people's needs. They are knowledgeable about young people's specific vulnerabilities. Young people feel they are cared for and protected and this has resulted in young people's risk-taking behaviours significantly reducing. However the home's missing from home policy does not reflect the national minimum standards or the latest government guidance.

The use of sanctions in the home is minimal. However, they are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. Any sanctions imposed are reviewed regularly for appropriateness and effectiveness. Young people stated that, 'They are fair.' Physical restraint is rarely used to manage behaviour and only where a young person puts themselves or others at serious risk at the home. Record keeping relating to one such incident was good and had been dealt with appropriately and in keeping with safeguarding procedures. The organisation has clearly looked at this incident very carefully and learning from this has been clearly incorporated into future staff training and practice.

Young people are protected from hazards by a wide range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, which ensures the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency. There are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people. There is an issue though in relation to the restriction of liberty for the young people living in the home as the front door is locked and young people have to ask staff to unlock the door should they require to go out. This does not reflect the national minimum standards or the latest government guidance. However, at the time of the inspection, the management team was currently considering this matter and actively balancing out the need to ensure young people's safety was not

compromised, while at the same time their liberty was not being restricted.

Staff files were examined and contained all the required information and are very well maintained. They demonstrate stringent recruitment and selection processes to ensure a safe and competent workforce.

Leadership and management

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

The children's home is very efficiently and effectively managed and benefits from an enthusiastic, committed Registered Manager and Deputy Manager. At the time of the last interim inspection the home was found to be making satisfactory progress. One requirement and two recommendations were made and these had been fully addressed at the time of this inspection. The capacity for continuous improvement is good. The organisation and the manager were very keen to take remedial action on shortfalls found during this inspection and take this forward to improve the service.

Staff are highly competent and caring, and have a very good understanding of individual young people and their needs. They have positive relationships with young people and are interested in their lives. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people.

Staff feel very well-supported and are developing their skills and knowledge through suitable and relevant training. There is an on-going programme of regular refresher training. This includes health and safety, fire awareness, emergency first aid, autism, Asperger's syndrome and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), safeguarding and children who are sexually exploited. Consequently staff greatly value the support provided by the management team who they hold in high esteem. Overall this means staff have good opportunities to develop professionally and to gain relevant qualifications.

The Statement of Purpose provides an accurate and comprehensive picture of the children's home and the services it provides. It has been up-dated to reflect staff changes and is available to inform professionals about how care is provided at the home. The home is run in line with the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. There is a good children's guide, which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home or on admission so that they know what to expect if they live here.

All staff are trained in a variety of safety and childcare subjects. This is supported by an on-going programme of regular refresher training, for example, health and safety, fire awareness, emergency first aid, autism, Asperger's syndrome and Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), safeguarding and children who are sexually exploited.

The manager has systems to monitor, report and evaluate the administration

systems of the home and the quality of care. Any weaknesses identified are promptly acted upon. The home has regular provider visits to the home and matters are monitored which is positive. However, the reports do not always fully illustrate that young people are given the opportunity to meet with the visitor in private and their views ascertained about the quality of their care. This is important as this provides young people with additional advocacy. The regulation 33 visitor has recognised this and the quality of last report had improved. The home has a development plan in place that evaluates the overall performance and quality of care provided in the home. This ensures that standards in the home continue to improve.

Overall, young people's case file records and other written documentation are generally of a good standard. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them accessible.

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.