

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC066917
Inspection date	25/10/2013
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/11/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This service offers long-term therapeutic placements for up to two young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is one of several homes owned and managed by a 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 **outstanding**.

Young people experience outstanding care because staff provide consistency, stability and a safe nurturing environment. As a result, young people achieve excellent personal growth. The trusting and sincere relationships observed between young people and staff are based on mutual respect and honesty. Young people receive on-going care and support from a care team that are dedicated, hard-working and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for them.

Young people enjoy living in a home where all aspects of care planning and practice is highly personalised and tailored to fully address their individual needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families and other agencies to ensure that the right help, guidance and services are enlisted to meet children's existing and emerging needs. Highly personalised placement plans effectively capture all these aspects of young people's care.

Priority is given to helping young people develop their sense of self-worth and to help them to maximise their educational and personal development. Young people's diverse needs are met because they are supported by an experienced and well-trained staff team.

Highly competent and well-trained staff, with the appropriate skills and experience, effectively support young people. Having a detailed knowledge of the young people they care for enables staff to provide the practical guidance and emotional support required. The home provides the stable, consistent and nurturing environment that young people need to grow, thrive and prepare for their future.

Safeguarding young people's welfare is placed at the highest priority; in terms of both the health and safety of the environment and promoting their physical and mental well-being. Behaviour management is both effective and individualised and based upon the quality of the relationship between young people and staff. Some minor inconsistencies in the recording of young people's comments following sanctions and the need to improve the recording of room searches were identified.

Very effective internal and external quality assurance monitoring processes enable the effective review of the quality of care provided; help to maintain the home's outstanding standard of care; and assist in promoting the on-going development and improvement of the service.

The home has an energetic, motivated and well-qualified manager, who leads by example and is ambitious to achieve the best possible outcomes for the young people in his care. Rigorous monitoring of care delivery, through the well-maintained recording systems, ensures that both strengths and weaknesses are identified and effective remedial action is taken.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure where any sanction, disciplinary measure or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in the records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that the home only carries out searches of a child, their room or their possessions in accordance with the homes guidance, this refers to recording if young people are present when rooms are searched and if they are not, why they are not. (NMS 3.20)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people achieve outstanding outcomes while living in this home. They are provided with opportunities and positive encouragement to reassess their past experiences, attitudes and behaviours which helps them make significant progress. Young people thrive living in an exceptionally caring and supportive home environment.

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. Boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality. They enjoy extremely robust and trusting

relationships based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps the young people to build up their emotional resilience and significantly improves their self-image.

Young people make excellent progress in relation to their individual starting points, within a nurturing and safe environment. Young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and cultures and to have respect for other people. This is because staff promote a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference. Young people express their feelings and emotions. This promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Young people enjoy a healthy lifestyle, take regular exercise and choose to eat healthy food options. New and different food options are regularly introduced to the home's menu to expand young people's food experience, nutritional knowledge and confidence.

Young people's attendance and educational attainment are very high and they build on their knowledge and skills. They develop a good work ethic and acquire the values they need to help them stay fully engaged in their education.

Young people enjoy a good range of activities both in the home and out in the community. This gives young people opportunities to develop their social skills and increase interactions with peers and the wider community.

Young people maintain helpful and close relationships with important people in their lives. Particular attention is given to planning and organising family contact, and staff listen to young people and family members in order to achieve arrangements that are appropriate and safe.

Young people learn about personal responsibility and growing independence. The staff team is committed to providing young people with individualised support, focused on their personal development and individual circumstances. Staff prioritise the work they do with young people in terms of life skills and future plans.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the excellent care and support provided by staff and they make exceptionally good progress.

Young people know how to make a formal complaint if they are not happy about something; although this has not been necessary for some time. Young people meet with staff regularly as a group and in one-to-one meetings to talk about how the home is running and sort out any issues raised, quickly and informally. Young people are confident that any complaint made will be addressed quickly and fairly.

Staff are exceptionally good at supporting young people to attend school and achieve. They advocate on behalf of young people to make sure they have an appropriate educational placement. Staff attend relevant meetings and events, such as parents' evenings. They also maintain regular contact with schools, enabling day-to-day issues to be addressed quickly. This supports young people's continuing attendance and achievement.

Young people's achievements and progress are celebrated by the home. This helps promote their self-esteem and confidence. Young people have made very good educational progress, particularly when compared to their individual starting points, when they moved into the home. The social worker for one young person, a poor attender prior to admission, said their educational progress has been 'remarkable.'

Young people benefit from having individual placement plans that detail how their needs will be addressed. Staff have a very good understanding of the young people's needs and backgrounds and care for them in line with their placement plans. Young people play an active role in the development and review of their placement plans. Clear and measureable outcomes make evaluating the effectiveness of the plans and the progress made by young people comparatively easy.

Staff work exceptionally well with social workers and other professionals to make sure young people's plans are implemented consistently. This helps to ensure continuity of care and good outcomes for young people. Social workers contacted, reported excellent communication with the home and described the outcomes for their young people as 'outstanding' and 'better than I could have hoped for'.

Staff are exceptionally child focused in their practice and they have a very positive view of young people. They place a strong value on making positive relationships with young people and make sure they are listened to and respected. Young people are actively involved in decisions about the running of the home.

Staff endeavour to work constructively to reduce the incidences of negative behaviour displayed by the young people. The young people have made significant progress in this regard.

There are good arrangements for storing medication and the administering and recording of medication is of a very high standard. Young people benefit from the very good links the home has with a range of health care services and staff have specific training in how to support and promote young people's health and well-being.

Young people benefit from living in an environment that is comfortable, homely and meets their needs. The house is decorated and furnished to a very high standard and its location provides a safe setting for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering aspects such as prevention of bullying, complaints, safeguarding and behaviour management. Staff are knowledgeable about these policies and they are effectively implemented. Staff receive good training with regular updates in all these areas; which enables them to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse.

Young people confirm that they feel safe living in this home. They feel able to talk to any member of staff if they are worried. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. Staff work effectively with young people and the safeguarding agencies to promote young people's safety.

The home has a very comprehensive set of individualised risk assessments for each young person in residence. Risk assessments are pertinent in identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these. These cover aspects of the young people's potential behaviour, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake.

Staff promote a positive culture of managing behaviour, with a focus on dealing with issues quickly to avoid escalation. Young people confirm that the use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. Staff manage young people's behaviour by building good relationships and by placing a strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour through praise and talking through any problems in a constructive way.

Staff help young people to increase their levels of self-control and awareness of the impact of their behaviour. They work hard with young people to help them reflect on significant incidents. This strengthens attachments, encourages young people to better manage their future behaviour and shows them that they are supported and valued. Recording of incidents, physical interventions and sanctions are on the whole good. However, staff do not always recording young people's comments nor do they recording their refusal to comment.

Young people confirm that the use of physical interventions are very infrequent; only being used by staff as a last resort to ensure safety for all. The resolution of most incidents is through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. The home's manager monitors each intervention, ensuring that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and comprehensively recorded. He also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, and to receive any medical attention if required or requested. He is also aware of the need to ensure that social workers and, where appropriate, parents, are fully informed.

Good staff guidance is available in respect of acknowledging and respecting young people's right to appropriate privacy. The home has a clear policy which details to staff the circumstances under which they may search young people's bedrooms. Such incidents are infrequent and all such searches undertaken since the last inspection, meet the specific requirements to justify this intervention. However, the room search record, does not make it clear if a young person is present when such a

search is undertaken, nor does it explain why their absence if they are not present.

Staff receive regular and wide-ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, ensures the continued development of staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

The location of this home enables staff to manage unauthorised absence well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement practice. Tested responses are also in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off-site excursion. Some episodes of young people being missing from care have occurred since the home's last inspection, all of which have been appropriately reported and dealt with in line with local protocols. Staff are very aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and use this insight to assist young people in managing their feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner. This approach deters young people, with a pre-existing history of putting themselves at risk, from absenting themselves and clearly reduces such behaviour over time.

Leadership and management

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

The management team is skilled, experienced and appropriately qualified. Managers keep up-to-date with developments in legislation and care practice and use forums such as team meetings to share these with staff. The manager leads by example and provides clear and highly effective leadership; setting very high standards for the service.

The manager and staff have a strong commitment to improving the service and outcomes for young people. For example, central to the home's ethos is the clear emphasis on reflective practice. This helps staff, in individual supervision sessions and team meetings, to critically examine ways of working with young people and explore how they can be more effective.

The arrangements for monitoring the quality of care and outcomes for young people are extremely robust and highlight how the service can improve further. Feedback from young people, social workers and other professionals is also used to identify strengths of the service and areas for development. There is a comprehensive development plan setting out how the home intends to build on and improve the service it currently provides.

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities' comprehensive information about the services offered by the home.

Staff rotas are flexible enough to ensure that the changing needs and circumstances of young people are consistently met. Staff shortages are managed well and changes are kept to a minimum. The team work hard to minimise the impact of any changes experienced by young people. The Registered Manager has a clear commitment to providing consistent care that helps young people sustain attachments with staff they know well.

The staff team is well qualified and experienced. Staff have access to a comprehensive and wide-ranging training programme which helps ensure they have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the young people. Staff receive excellent support in regular, high quality formal supervision. This, and highly effective communication provides staff with a good understanding of each young person's needs, how to support them and how to keep them safe. Highly personalised care and support is delivered to each young person as a result of good staffing levels, and the effective allocation of these throughout each shift.

Young people's case records are clear, up-to-date and stored securely, and would contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their time in care if they choose to access these documents in the future.

The Registered Manager notifies the appropriate authorities about all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home. No requirements or recommendations were made at the home's last interim inspection.

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.