

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC067895
Inspection date	17/04/2013
Inspector	Ann-Marie Born
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

The home is registered to provide care for up to three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is run by a partnership company. Education in line with the national curriculum is available at an external school maintained by the company. The home provides young people access to a psychotherapist in a therapy suite. The psychotherapist also provides advice to the staff team.

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**.

Young people make exceptional progress in a number of key areas, notably reducing challenging behaviours, reducing absences, keeping safe, developing self-esteem and education attendance. Young people's safety and welfare significantly improve which enables them to make progress in other areas. Young people are positive about their care, relationships with staff and feel well supported. A particular strength is the long-term commitment to young people when they move to independence or alternative placements. The manager said, 'I am really proud of the outreach work we do with those young people. It's like a family; they have us to fall back on if they need to.'

Young people feel safe and stringent attention to safeguarding ensures they are safe. Consulting and forming agreements with young people is central to their individual care planning. A young person wrote on his day-to-day care plan, 'I love it'. As a result, young people's sense of self-worth, development of social and life skills and control of their lives are improved. An independent reviewing officer stated, 'I think the staff are lovely. There is no doubt I would recommend it for other young people. It is really family oriented and run like a family home with the proper therapeutic input.'

There are some areas of development. This is particularly with regard to consulting

parents as part of the independent monitoring process. In addition, young people do not have access to a computer within the home to assist with their education.

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
33 (2001)	ensure that the person carrying out regulation 33 visits shall interview, with their consent and in private, such of the young people accommodated there and their parents as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care in the home. (Regulation 33 (4)(a))	01/07/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people have easy and regular access to a computer to support their education. (Volume 5, statutory guidance 2.120)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people are happy, sensitively cared for and relate extremely well to staff and each other. Each young person is cared for and respected as an individual with their own personality and unique traits. All cultural, gender and religious needs are identified and provided for. As a result young people make good progress in developing a positive self-view while forming and sustaining attachments. Staff continually engage young people. Achievements are recognised and celebrated thereby promoting confidence, self-esteem and feelings of self-worth. A parent commented, 'He had been moved round a lot and stayed in a lot of other places before he went there. That's the happiest he's been and he's doing really well there.'

Young people's health needs are well met and they enjoy a healthy well-balanced diet. Young people have access to the services they need to ensure they experience a good quality of life, including the in-house psychotherapist and specialist practitioners. These include the sexual health nurse and smoking cessation services. As a result, young people learn the importance of healthy lifestyles. For example,

none of the young people in the house now smoke cigarettes. Young people also participate in regular inclusive physical activities within the local community. This effectively promotes a sense of belonging as well as confidence in their abilities. Parents, social workers and staff report on marked improvements in young people's self-esteem and development.

All young people benefit from full attendance either at the company school or in mainstream education. Strong personal education plans identify young people's progress and achievements. Staff work closely with young people on a day-to-day basis and through the key worker system to promote positive educational outcomes. Some young people have made significant progress in their education attainment, enabling them to transfer to mainstream schools. A parent stated, 'He's back in mainstream school and he wouldn't have done that if he wasn't with them.'

Young people are actively and positively engaged in inclusive activities within the home and local community. The innovative daily meetings allow young people to contribute their views on day-to-day life in the home and to offer each other support. Topics discussed include preparing for a test in school and sharing birth family news. Successful engagement in local activities provide young people with the opportunity to develop social and life skills while making a positive contribution to their wider community. For example, one young person volunteers in a local youth club for younger children and all young people participate in charity fund raising events.

Excellent contact is maintained between the home and young people's parents. The home recognises the importance of maintaining significant relationships for young people. They also sensitively support young people when contact is not possible. Young people fully benefit from the security, stability and sense of consistency this provides, both now, and for their longer-term relationships and support in adulthood. Parents report that they are 'really appreciative' of the support they receive to maintain contact and say 'the home keep in communication so I always know what is happening.'

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy excellent, warm and positive relationships with staff that are based on mutual care and respect. Staff encourage peer friendships and provide a happy, relaxed atmosphere where young people experience lots of smiles and laughter within consistent, safe and appropriate boundaries. An independent visitor commented that the home, 'is a happy place to be round' and that staff have, 'good, strong relationships with each other and the young people.' As a result young people feel valued as individuals that staff are consistently concerned with their welfare and grow in confidence and self-esteem.

Young people feel involved and consulted about all aspects of their lives. Their views are captured by way of the daily house meeting, well planned key work sessions and preparation and attendance at their review meetings. In addition, they are actively

involved not only in staff recruitment but staff appraisals as well. As a result young people's sense of belonging and being listened to, enable them to express their wishes and feelings. Young people are treated fairly and equally and quickly settle in to their home where they want to stay long term. Many young people remain in touch with staff and view this as their home to return to for advice, guidance and support as an adult. Equally the manager and staff view young people as part of the family and have high aspirations for them to succeed and achieve. A parent commented, 'He had been moved round a lot and stayed in a lot of other places before he went there. That's the happiest he's been and he's doing really well there.'

Records evidence and young people confirm that they are confident to complain and understand how to do so. The majority of 'grumbles' or concerns are effectively addressed in the daily meetings negating the need for many formal complaints. Any complaints that are received are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken and outcomes and young people receive a written response. Young people's feelings of self-worth and self-assurance in their ability to communicate are enhanced by these measures.

Young people's day-to-day needs are very well met in line with strong plans promoting their health, development and well-being. Excellent communication with parents and professionals ensure that they are consulted regularly, contribute to young people's reviews and are kept informed regarding any concerns, progress and achievements. Placement plans identify needs relating to young people's cultural background and personal identity and how to address them, thereby promoting inclusivity and equality. Plans are regularly reviewed and updated together with young people to identify clear objectives to meet their individual needs. Young people benefit from this collective, holistic approach to their care which leads to measurable outcomes. An independent reviewing officer said, 'He is doing really well and making significant improvements.'

Staff support young people in their education by ensuring they attend school daily and are able to fully participate in out of school activities. In addition, staff attend planning meetings and school events as a good parent would. However, although young people can use the computers in the nearby local library, there is no computer within the home they can access in order to support their education.

Young people enjoy living in a large, comfortable home which is close to all local amenities. They each have their own bedroom which reflect their interests and are personalised to their taste. The communal rooms are well decorated and furnished in colours chosen by young people. Young people state they are 'happy' in the home and take evident pride in their surroundings.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Safeguarding young people is a priority and central to practice. Young people say

they feel safe and they are supported to keep safe. Young people know staff care about them and feel secure in the home. The excellent daily meetings effectively allow young people to share concerns and identify potential risks. Consequently any emerging concerns are identified and addressed immediately. Staff are proactive in safeguarding young people, understand their responsibilities and act within clear procedures where required. There are effective links with the Local Authority Designated Officer and safeguarding procedures are agreed with the local authority. This ensures young people are protected in line with legislation.

Practice is informed by excellent individual risk assessments which balance minimising risks without impeding young people's independence. As a result young people are not unnecessarily restricted. Staff are fully aware there are times when young people seek risk-taking; they approach this by talking through potential consequences to provide young people with a sense of their own responsibility and choices. In addition, staff are challenging young people to think about differences in broader terms than race or religion, for example understanding family backgrounds and the effect of substance misuse on babies and children. A parent said, 'I think it's brilliant and I am happy he's there. He is safe there.'

Positive behaviour is encouraged through incentives and well planned key work sessions. Exceptional therapeutic treatment and positive handling plans are updated together with young people following any episode of restraint. These effectively allow young people and staff to understand and address individual triggers. Consequently the use of restraints is minimal as young people feel secure and trust staff in the home. The strength of these relationships keeps any difficulties in perspective and allows for positive progress through challenging periods. Warm and positive responses from staff encourage young people to behave respectfully, consider others' feelings and learn tolerance. An independent reviewing officer stated, 'He was an incredibly challenging young person when he first got there, but since he has been there he has developed insight in to how his behaviour has consequences.'

Young people very rarely go missing, and as a result of feeling settled and supported, previously entrenched patterns of absconding have stopped. A social worker commented that a young person was always running away and she doesn't there. The social worker also commented 'I am really impressed with her being so settled there given her history. She is the most settled she has been anywhere.'

The effective use of appropriate sanctions enables young people to understand the consequences of their behaviour. Examples include, researching the impact of racism on others and the use of racist and homophobic language. The impact of the sanction is evaluated to inform behaviour plans and young people sign to record their views, one stated 'it is fair'. Young people are well informed of their rights and the range of independent people and organisations available for them to consult or complain to. Representatives from independent advocacy services regularly meet with young people to discuss their care and experiences. As a result, young people develop an awareness of the choices open to them and their sense of security and well-being is enhanced.

Robust recruitment procedures are effectively applied. They are further bolstered by young people's direct involvement in the process. Young people are safeguarded by these measures.

Young people's physical safety is assured by excellent health and safety procedures. Established systems are in place for the routine checking and servicing of all fire equipment and other appliances. Young people know how to exit the home in the event of a fire and practice how to do this.

Leadership and management

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

The home is efficiently and conscientiously managed. Excellent arrangements exist for monitoring the quality of care by the strength of the manager and deputy manager. The experienced and nurturing manager has observably positive relationships with the young people in her care. She maintains a close day-to-day overview of each young person individually alongside the general running of the home. Any shortfalls are promptly identified and addressed. As a result young people's progress is monitored and the demonstrable differences the home has made to young people's outcomes are identified. This promotes and maintains high standards while contributing to young people's experience of being valued.

Independent monitoring visits routinely contribute to improvements, including ascertaining young people's views on their care and experiences. However, parents are not consulted; therefore their opinions are not being obtained. The manager communicates with and notifies agencies, including Ofsted, of any significant incidents ensuring young people are protected by multi-agency decision making.

The Statement of Purpose clearly outlines the aims and objectives of the home. In addition young people receive comprehensive information in their individual welcome pack. This clearly informs them about the home and the care that is to be provided. As a result young people are appropriately placed thereby enhancing their life experience and opportunities for success.

Young people benefit from high staffing levels and the care and attention they receive from the well supported and committed staff team. A staff member said, 'I really love the work because I feel that we are making a real difference in children's lives.' All staff members either hold or are enrolled on the National Vocational Qualification at level 3, or a diploma course, apart from new staff members still within their probationary period. In addition, staff attend specific training with therapists on the individual needs of young people and further training is available in specialist subjects to enhance their skills. This includes: attachment theory, separation and loss and safeguarding sexually active young people. Consequently young people are cared for by staff who are appropriately trained to meet their needs.

Staff members report that they receive strong peer and management support and

benefit from a good, formal supervision process which enables them to fully support young people. A staff member said, 'I think it's a really happy home to be fair. All the young people know that if they have any problem at all they can talk to staff. They have settled in well and there is quite a lot of attachment between young people and staff and they can speak about anything.'

There were no requirements of recommendations made at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, the manager assures improvement and further benefits to young people by the efficient use of monthly auditing processes to identify strengths and areas for development.

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.