

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC068827
Inspection date	14/06/2012
Inspector	Maureen Hamer
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	28/02/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home accommodates up to five young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned and managed by a local authority. At the time of the inspection, there were four young people in the home.

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 **adequate**.

The manager and staff group work as a team to ensure young people feel safe and secure. Young people are respected and supported as individuals. Risk assessments have improved but care plans do not describe the care provided and progress made towards improving young people's outcomes. Young people say that they are listened to and they enjoy living in a home where they feel cared for.

Quality assurance has improved and the manager is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses. The service shows capacity to improve. Action has been taken to continue to improve services but as yet good practice in all aspects of record keeping is not embedded. This is reflected in the requirements and recommendations raised as a result of this inspection. These also highlight other areas for improvement relating to young people's education and training and monitoring of the home.

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
4	revise the home's Statement of Purpose so that it consists of all	28/09/2012

(2001)	matters in Schedule 1, particularly the relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the children's home and the home's policy and procedures for emergency admissions (Regulation 4; Schedule 1 (5)(9))	
17B (2001)	include in the written volume kept for the purpose of recording within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline in a children's home, the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure, description of any injury to the child concerned and any medical treatment administered, and the duration of the restraint (Regulation 17(B) (3)(f)(g)(4)(a))	28/09/2012
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in permanent form which is kept up to date and is signed by the author of each written entry (Regulation 28 (1)(b)(c))	28/09/2012
34 (2001)	supply to the HMCI a report in respect of any review conducted by the manager of matters set out in schedule 6. (Regulation 34 (2); Schedule (6))	28/09/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that help is given by the home's staff to children to achieve their educational or training goals. That staff work with a child's education provider to maximise each child's achievement and to minimise any underachievement (NMS 8.4)
- monitor each child's placement plan by a key worker who ensures that the actions of the plan are implemented and progress is monitored including the identification and impact of sanctions in the day-to-day care of that child (NMS 25.2)
- include children's views on all aspects of their care and support. (NMS 1.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for children and young people are **adequate**.

Young people report that, prior to living in this home, their attendance at school was poor. Some young people had not attended school for a number of years. Some young people expressed their appreciation towards staff for gaining access to education. However, some young people's educational attainment is not progressing at the same rate as their peer group. Staff are not always actively involved in working with young people to promote their educational attainment.

Young people state that they are listened to. This has contributed to young people having positive relationships with staff in the home and has improved young people's self-confidence. As a result, young people have stopped going missing and have stopped being engaged in criminal activity.

Young people's health needs are identified and they have access to universal services health services, such as the optician. This normalises their lives and improves their health outcomes.

Young people are given access to support to help them to address their negative health choices, such as smoking. However, young people are reluctant to accept that they are vulnerable to these risks and their negative behaviours continue. Young people are provided with specialist support from services, such as child and adolescent mental health services. This is effective in promoting young people's emotional well-being.

Young people do not engage in some assessment tools due to communication difficulties. This hinders effective planning and successful transition to adulthood.

Young people are encouraged to contribute to the home and to take responsibility for aspects of their own personal needs, such as cooking and laundry. Young people are also supported to look for local voluntary opportunities that will contribute to their applications for employment in the future.

Young people are successfully encouraged to develop positive friendships outside of the home; this supports their good mental health. Young people say they enjoy being given opportunities to do activities, such as ice skating, which they find enjoyable and promotes their sense of well-being.

Young people have positive contact with friends and family that enables them to keep in touch with people who are important to them and to build attachments to support their sense of self-esteem.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy positive and respectful relationships with staff. Young people state that there are times when there are tensions between the young people and some lack of respect. Staff are skilled to diffuse negative behaviours and successfully avoid escalation of negative behaviours.

Staff set clear, consistent and appropriate boundaries for young people. Young people feel they are treated fairly and respectfully and this has led to improvements in their challenging behaviour. Staff maintain a sanctions log, but incentives and sanctions are not identified in the young person's behaviour or care plans. Consequently, the effectiveness of sanctions is not monitored.

Staff successfully engage young people in house meetings. Young people say that their views are acted upon in the running of the home. However, some one-to-one meetings between young people and staff are missed, reducing opportunities to engage young people in discussions about their progress.

Staff recognise and respect each young person on an individual basis. Positive action is taken to promote young people's cultural values; for example, as expressed in their personal hair styles and in their music. Consequently young people's individuality and their sense of identity and self-respect is promoted.

Young people express appreciation at the work that staff do to support them. One young person said, 'Getting me into school has made things much better. I want to do well and get a job.'

Staff have made some improvements to young people's care plans. However, these are not comprehensive and do not contain actions or monitor progress on outcomes. In addition, staff are not always actively promoting young people's educational attainment. Consequently, young people's life chances are reduced.

Staff are good at communicating with parents. In addition, staff provide young people and parents with outreach support to promote successful home contact. This helps to rebuild positive relationships between parents and children.

Staff do not always ensure that documentation is dated or signed according to the home's procedures. Consequently, the accuracy of record keeping and ensuring that the necessary people, such as young people, are engaged in their record keeping, is hindered.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people have good relationships with staff and feel very able to talk to staff about their concerns. Young people's welfare and well-being is promoted in this home and young people report that they feel safe and cared for.

Staff carry out good risk assessments that identify antecedents and actions to take to reduce the impact of risk-taking behaviours. There are positive and proactive behaviour management strategies that are consistently applied.

Staff listen to young people and show good practice in following the home's going missing policy. Young people state that they have stopped going missing as a result of the effective support that they receive from staff. Staff have a good working arrangement in place with the police, with who they meet regularly, to ensure young people are safe and that the correct procedure is being followed.

Young people's behaviour has improved and there has been a reduction in the use of physical restraints. Following the use of a restraint young people and staff receive a

de-brief to ensure that lessons are learnt and positive behaviour is promoted. The behaviour log does not hold all the necessary information, but this shortfall does not impact on young people.

Staff working with young people are carefully vetted to ensure they are suitably skilled and knowledgeable to promote young people's well-being and to keep them safe.

Young people's welfare is promoted and allegations, once reported, are handled fairly, and quickly. There has been an occasion when a member of staff did not initially report an allegation that was subsequently reported and management acted promptly to ensure young people's safety was maintained. This shortfall had no negative impact on young people.

Young people live in a well cared for home that is spacious and young people report their privacy is respected.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from a Registered Manager and staff team that strive to make them feel safe and cared for. The manager promotes a culture of respect and values diversity. Staff have regular team meetings that are focused on young people and enable staff to reflect on practice to improve outcomes for young people.

Requirements and recommendations from the previous inspection have been met. The home has updated its children's guide so that young people have access to contact details in the event of them having any concerns about their care. Risk assessments have improved and this supports a consistent and robust approach to promoting young people's welfare.

Quality assurance has been improved. The manager has used this information to inform the home's team assessment and staff development plan. However, the monitoring has not been submitted to Ofsted and the views of young people, parents and the placing authority is not apparent. Independent quality assurance is undertaken on a regular basis and is of a good standard.

The manager has a good knowledge of the strengths and weakness of the home. The Statement of Purpose is clear but does not contain the admission procedure for emergency admissions and does not give all the qualifications for all members of staff.

There has been some successful staff recruitment and young people are well supervised. Good vetting practice is in place to protect young people from harm. Staff are provided with a good range of training opportunities to ensure they are competent to provide good quality care to young people.

Staff have worked with young people to improve the decoration of the home and it feels homely and spacious. Young people report that they enjoy where they live. The manager ensures that health and safety is well maintained in the home to promote young people's well-being and safety.

There are good links with other organisations, such as the child and adolescent mental health service. The manager invites specialist services into team meetings to ensure young people's needs are met.

The manager has delegated responsibilities for record keeping and has developed supervision arrangements to ensure that all staff feel supported with the new responsibilities they are undertaking. There are some good areas of practice emerging but the practice needs to be embedded. Some records are not clear or up to date and, consequently, do not provide a coherent understanding of the young person's life and progress.

All significant events relating to the protection of children accommodated in the home are notified to the appropriate authorities by the registered person.

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* (March 2011) and the evaluation schedule for children's homes.