

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC356565
Inspection date	18/07/2013
Inspector	Pete Hylton
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	09/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The children's home is run by a private organisation and is registered to provide care and accommodation for two 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**.

The quality of relationships between staff and young people are good. The staff team ensure that young people's needs are central to the delivery of care. Highly individualised care plans are regularly reviewed and audited. Young people's views are listened to, respected and acted upon. This contributes to a culture of continuous improvement in the home. Young people have positive views about the home, they feel safe and know that the staff respect them as individuals. This is reflected in similarly positive views from parents, carers, social workers and teachers.

The home is currently without a Registered Manager. All appropriate actions have been taken with regards to registering the acting manager. A registration decision will shortly be made. The acting manager effectively manages the home and monitors all records. Staff are supported in their duties and their training needs well met. Areas of strength are recognised and developmental points addressed. A robust approach to monitoring the home ensures that any defects are swiftly identified and resolved. Young people are safe and feel safe at the home.

As a result of this inspection, four recommendations have been made. These relate to: the recording of sanctions; ensuring all young people know the fire evacuation procedure; sending monitoring reports to Ofsted and ensuring that independent monitoring reports are clearly stored in the home. These shortfalls do not impact on the outcomes for young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where any sanctions, disciplinary measures or restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded in records kept by the home (NMS 3.18)
- ensure that there is an emergency escape plan that all staff and children are familiar with and have practiced so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that the registered provider's written report of a visit carried out under Regulation 33 is lodged in the home for the manager and staff to read and to respond (NMS 21.8)
- ensure that reports made under Regulation 34 are completed at six monthly intervals and a copy of every report is sent to HMCI within 28 days of completion. (Volume 5 Statutory Guidance paragraph 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people develop their skills with regards to independence. They learn how to complete basic household chores such as planning, shopping for and cooking meals. All young people take part in cleaning tasks around the home. As a result, young people develop skills that equip them for successful transitions to adulthood. A parent commented that their young person has, 'developed skills to live independently.'

Young people understand how to manage their own health needs. Where appropriate to do so, they take responsibility for managing their medication and maintaining their health appointments. This results in young people understanding the importance of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Young people eat healthy meals, take part in regular activities and enjoy relaxing in the home. They feel settled, relaxed and able to enjoy their individual pursuits and interests.

All young people are aware of the risks associated with harmful behaviours. As a result of trusting relationships with the staff team, they are able to discuss any areas of concern. When additional support is required, young people are able to request access to specialist services. In relation to their starting points, young people make good progress in reducing their unsafe behaviours. Incidents of missing from the home are reducing. This is because young people are able to discuss their concerns and address their behaviours in a safe and constructive manner.

Young people make good progress in managing their emotions. As a result, they quickly settle at the home and develop socially acceptable behaviours. A social worker commented that a young person has made a 'marked reduction in challenging behaviour.' This is further enhanced through the progress that young

people make in developing and maintaining their self-esteem and emotional resilience. Young people feel valued and respected at the home. They know that they are listened to and that their views are respected. They develop positive relationships with their peers and the staff team. Furthermore, young people are able to maintain relationships with their families and friends. As a result, young people are secure in their emotional attachments.

Young people regularly attend education settings. As a result, they make good progress in developing their qualifications and career plans. Where young people are beyond compulsory school age, they are continuing in further educational opportunities. As a result, the educational attainment of young people is good and they develop their readiness for adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Relationships between staff and young people are good. The staff team ensure that the individual needs of young people are at the forefront of their practice. Highly individualised care plans ensure that the needs of young people are promoted, recognised and met. As a result of regular consultation and review of care plans, young people know that their needs are promoted. A member of staff commented that the 'opinions and views of young people are very important. It's important that we respect what young people want and how they feel.' As a result, young people receive care that reflects their choices and respects their individuality.

Staff are confident and competent in providing care to young people based on their religious and cultural needs. Young people are encouraged and supported to follow their faith and recognise their heritage. The staff team ensure that any specific requirements are catered for. For example, specific foods and religious artefacts are provided where requested. The staff team are sensitive to the individual needs of young people and are skilled in meeting their diverse needs.

The staff team place great emphasis on the benefits of education. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend their school or college placements. Where difficulties arise, or young people are unwilling to engage, the staff team ensure that effective support is given at all times. A teacher commented, 'the home work well with us to share concerns and strategies.' As a result of good relationships between home and school, young people receive consistency, familiarity and routine. This promotes improved outcomes and encourages young people to succeed and make progress.

Young people enjoy a varied and healthy menu. They are involved in the planning of meals and are fully encouraged to take part in the preparation of meals. Food provided for young people is wholesome, varied and balanced. The staff team ensure that medication is carefully stored and administered to young people. Secure storage and effective recording ensures that mistakes are minimised. This is further enhanced by regular and robust monitoring of all health records in the home. The

acting manager ensures that all health plans are up to date and that the needs of young people are promoted. The home is situated close to local amenities and all young people are quickly registered with relevant health services when they arrive at the home. As a result, their health needs are promoted and met.

Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with their friends and family. A telephone is freely available for young people to use and a range of support services are promoted. This ensures that young people can raise concerns or worries to the appropriate parties. Furthermore, the staff team ensure that parents and carers, where appropriate to do so, are fully updated. A parent commented that they have a 'good relationship with the staff and they keep me fully updated' and that they have 'no concerns about the home or the care that they provide.' Advocacy services are provided and young people are encouraged to raise their concerns and worries. The young person's guide is clear, detailed and contains all required information. A clear complaints policy is available to young people and they are encouraged to voice their concerns. Since the last inspection, there have been no complaints. Young people are happy at the home and know that the staff take their views and opinions seriously.

The home is exceptionally well presented and provides young people with a comfortable living environment. Staff take pride in maintaining a homely environment and ensure that all areas of the home are kept clean and tidy. As a result, young people are encouraged to develop a sense of pride and belonging in the home. They are encouraged to personalise their own bedrooms. Furthermore, young people are encouraged to choose colour schemes for communal areas of the home. As a result, young people form an attachment and sense of belonging; they feel part of the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The behaviour of young people is well-managed through the use of positive rewards and encouragement. A social worker commented that the staff team, 'provide firm and appropriate boundaries for young people.' As a result, young people are supported in developing positive behaviour. All staff are appropriately trained in the home's chosen method of restraint. The home's recording system is appropriate and ensures that all required details can be clearly and accurately recorded in the event of restraint taking place. Since the last inspection, there have been no restraints.

Sanctions are rarely used in the home and when applied, are fair and reasonable. The home's recording system has space for young people's comments. However, where young people refuse to comment, this is not recorded. As a result, the acting manager is not able to follow up with young people the reasons why they refuse to comment. There is no demonstrable impact, to date, on the outcomes for young people as a result of this shortfall.

The home ensures that careful risk assessment underpins staff practice. The

individual needs and vulnerabilities of young people are clearly recorded and all staff are clear in their responsibilities. The home has built effective links with the local police and ensures that any concerns are shared and acted on. This results in an environment where young people feel safe, secure and able to discuss their concerns.

The frequency of young people going missing has reduced. Where serious events occur, the staff team ensure that appropriate actions are taken. All relevant parties are kept updated and the staff team are proactive in helping young people to reduce their risk-taking behaviours. As a result, young people are supported in developing a better understanding of how to stay safe and protect themselves from harm.

Recruitment practice is sound. The acting manager ensures all relevant checks are in place prior to staff working in the home. As a result, the safety of young people is further promoted as they are protected from unsuitable adults. Visitors to the home are appropriately chaperoned and their identities checked. The home is safely maintained and presents no risks or hazards to young people. A comprehensive environmental check system is in place and this ensures that all areas of the home are robustly monitored. As a result, young people live in a home where their safety is given the highest priority. This is further underpinned through all required checks on electrical and gas installations being up to date. Furthermore, regular scheduled servicing of all fire detection and prevention equipment ensures the safety of young people is promoted. However, since the last recorded fire drill, a young person was admitted to the home and no fire drill was conducted. As a result, the acting manager has not been able to evidence that all young people know how to safely evacuate. There has been no demonstrable impact, to date, on the outcomes for young people as a result of this shortfall.

Leadership and management

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

The home was last inspected in January 2013 and was judged to be making good progress. No requirements or recommendations were made. The home has been without a Registered Manager for 20 weeks. An application to be registered has been made by the acting manager. This application is currently in progress and a registration decision will shortly be made. The acting manager is also the Responsible Individual to the home. As a result, the acting manager has ensured that he home has been appropriately managed and monitored since the last inspection. There has been no detrimental impact to the outcomes for young people.

The home's Statement of Purpose contains all required information and is up to date. As a result, young people, parents and placing authorities can review the home's aims, ethos and principles. The home is well-managed and has clear plans for development. The experienced acting manager effectively plans and monitors the delivery of services in the home. The home's development plan clearly defines how the home will improve and what the key targets are. These are regularly monitored and evaluated to ensure that they remain tangible. As a result, young people benefit

from a home that is effectively managed.

The acting manager ensures that the staff team are conversant with the latest practice developments. For example, when legislation changes, effective communication with the staff team ensures that all staff are clear in new ways of working. All staff are regularly supervised and up to date with their training. A member of staff commented, 'I feel really well supported and the training is good. The manager helps us to develop as professionals.'

Regular progress reports are sent to parents, carers and placing authorities. These reports are evaluative, accurate and clearly state the progress that young people make at the home. The acting manager ensures that recommendations for further improvement are made and discussed at regular reviews. As a result, young people live in a home that is consistently looking to improve the standard of care. Relationships between the home and outside agencies are positive and complimentary about the home. Comments include; 'the staff are absolutely brilliant', 'I am very happy with the placement' and 'staff work hard to help young people reach their potential.'

The acting manager ensures that the home is regularly and robustly monitored. Records are thoroughly checked and improvements, where necessary, are made. The use of monthly progress reports underpin effective monitoring. Parents, carers and social workers value the feedback about progress and have positive relationships with the home. Furthermore, formal feedback is sought from young people, parents, carers and placing authorities. As a result, any concerns or areas for improvement are swiftly identified and resolved. The acting manager regularly monitors all areas of the home in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2011. However, these reports are not always sent to Ofsted. There is no demonstrable impact, to date, on the outcomes for young people as a result of this shortfall.

An independent person regularly visits the home and produces monitoring reports. These reports effectively support the acting manager in developing the service. However, they are not always lodged in the home. Staff discuss these visits in regular team meetings and effective communication ensures all staff are clear with regards to identified improvements. However, a recommendation has been made to ensure that copies of all reports are kept in the home.

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.