

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC357133
Inspection date	16/06/2011
Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	17/12/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides care and accommodation for three young people aged between 11 and 17 years. The home is a three storey semi-detached house.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **satisfactory**.

Children and young people receive satisfactory levels of support to lead healthy lives. Not all staff are qualified in First aid, trained in medicine administration and food hygiene or have the skills they need to promote children and young people's good health.

The home supports children and young people to attend school and staff do their best to provide learning opportunities for children who are excluded from school. The home has had limited success in liaising with schools and the local authority to provide education for young people who are excluded from school in Year 11. As a result, a young person has received only two hours a week teaching since being at the home.

Children and young people feel safe and are safe at the home. There is a reduction in the number of restraints and missing from care incidents. There is a robust staff recruitment programme. Health and safety checks are carried out routinely so the home provides a safe environment.

Children and young people respond well to firm boundaries. They have opportunities to contribute their views to influence the way the home runs but there are delays in decision making and feedback relating to matters of concern raised by children and young people. This means children and young people feel they are not being listened to.

Fifty percent of the staff team, including the manager are qualified in caring for children and young people and others are enrolled or waiting to enrol on a suitable qualification course. Some staff have not yet undertaken important training to give them the skills and knowledge they need to provide good quality care. The manager works shifts and this impedes the development of the home, because it reduces the time she has to manage the home.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- work closely with the responsible local authority to make sure that a child who is excluded or is not on a school roll is supported and enabled to resume full time education (Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 2.119)
- ensure that children's views, wishes and feelings are acted upon in the day to day running of the home and that they understand how their views have been taken into account. Ensure also, that they receive prompt feedback relating to matters they raise (NMS 1)
- ensure that staff are equipped with the skills to meet the needs of the children and young people and the purpose of the setting (NMS 18.1)
- ensure that the overall number, competence and deployment of staff can fulfil the home's Statement of Purpose and meet the individual needs of all children and young people resident (NMS 17.1)
- ensure there is a written development plan for the future of the home, that is reviewed annually and identifies any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirms the continuation of the home's current operation and resources (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle and in particular, a healthy diet. They enjoy good health and have opportunities to participate in physical exercise such as cycling, swimming and attending the gymnasium. Meals are nutritious, varied and contain foods from other cultures. Children and young people's dietary preferences are accommodated as far as possible. Children and young people receive the medical, dental and ophthalmic treatment, including medicines they need. They receive advice that promotes their sexual health and they significantly reduce their tobacco, drug and alcohol misuse.

Children and young people make the most of their education by improving their attendance at school and increasing their attainment levels. Those who are excluded from school have limited teaching and this has a negative impact on their achievement levels. They participate in planned activities with staff that promote their learning and maintain structure in their day. This means that they adapt more easily to a return to formal education or work. Young people who have completed their formal education attend college or secure jobs.

Children and young people participate in a wide variety of leisure activities in accordance with their personal choice and interests. They try out new hobbies and participate in local groups and sports teams. They contribute to the home by participating in routine chores and take on additional jobs for financial reward. They learn new skills such as using a washing machine, basic car maintenance and repairing furniture, in preparation for adulthood. They make good progress in all areas. A parent said: 'The service is brilliant. My child has come on leaps and bounds'.

Children and young people exercise choice, develop self control and improve their social skills. They increase their confidence and learn to interact with others in an increasingly positive way. They maintain contact with family and friends in accordance with their care plans, although not all understand the reason for limitations on contact.

Quality of care

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

Social workers report that the home provides good quality placement plans and risk assessments that guide the staff team in the care they provide. A social worker commented: ' They are good at supporting the young person's needs, including contact. They are flexible and inclusive and the young person has settled in well'.

Systems are in place to provide children and young people with opportunities to contribute to decisions made about their daily lives. Children and young people report that staff invite them to give their views and talk about their feelings. They confirm that they have a say in the decoration of their own bedrooms, in menu planning and in how they spend their time. A good routine for meetings with children and young people is not yet established with the current group of young people and there is some delay in responding to the matters they raise. This contributes to children and young people feeling they are not being listened to. Some children and young people have not yet developed trusting relationships with staff and are reluctant to share their worries, concerns and feelings with staff. The manager and staff team are aware of this and encourage children and young people to be more open and to develop trust in the staff team.

Children and young people know how to make a complaint and report that complaints are dealt with appropriately and in good time. They know their placement plans and are involved in developing these so they are clear what they need to do to achieve good outcomes for themselves. One said: ' The staff are good. They do their best to look after us the best they can'.

Staff refer children and young people to a range of services whose purpose is to promote children and young people's emotional and psychological wellbeing and to reduce their offending and antisocial behaviours. They enable and encourage children and young people to attend appointments with these and other professionals. Staff encourage children and young people to engage in enjoyable activities both in the home and in the community. These range from go-karting to swimming, horse riding and the cinema. Those who have a particular talent, such as drawing, are encouraged to practise and develop their skills. Some children and young people need a lot of support from staff and say they get bored and would like to engage in more activities.

Staff support children and young people to attend school. Where young people are excluded from school, the home liaises with schools to establish a programme of education during the normal school day. However, some young people have only received a maximum of two hours teaching a week for two months just prior to GCSE examinations. Staff support children and young people with any learning materials provided, but this is not sufficient for young people to be confident about entering examinations. Staff accompany young people to college or school to sit examinations where young people have lost confidence.

The home is located close to bus routes and to a large town where there is a good range of shops and leisure facilities. There is a small garden that is not sufficiently developed to use as a suitable outdoor space; however, there is a park nearby where staff take children and young people to play football and other games.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people report that they are safe living at the home. The level of challenging behaviour diminishes as children and young people settle in the home and this is evidenced by a clear reduction in restraints and the low level of missing from care incidents. Children and young people respond well to the clear boundaries and good consistency of care that the staff team provide. There is a zero-tolerance of bullying policy and children and young people know what is and is not, acceptable behaviour. Staff promote good relationships between children and young people and ensure close supervision when two or more are together. This ensures they have the chance to intervene quickly in any disputes that arise. Staff challenge racist comments appropriately and raise awareness of other cultures, faiths and ethnic groups.

Good risk assessments effectively guide staff to ensure children's safety is promoted and any risks are identified and eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level. Regular and effective health and safety checks ensure that the home provides a physically safe environment. Robust staff recruitment processes and supervision of visitors protect children and young people from unsafe persons.

Leadership and management

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

The two recommendations made at the last inspection have been addressed. This means that menu planning is better and focuses on more healthy foods and recording of restraints has improved.

The Statement of Purpose satisfactorily describes the services the home provides. Although the home has access to a play therapist, this service is not utilised by any of the children and young people currently living at the home. Children and young people have individualised and age-appropriate guides to the home that contain information about the local community as well as the home. They also contain contact details for advocacy, children's rights services and information about how to complain. Children and young people confirmed they have each received a guide to the home.

The manager competently supervises and supports the staff team to develop their skills and expertise in caring for children and young people. Five full time staff work at the home and children and young people say they know these five well. There is currently a vacancy for a part time member of staff. The manager leads by example and is included in the staff rota, working shifts as required. This has an impact on her availability to complete management tasks and to develop the home further. Additional support is provided by agency staff to cover holidays, training and staff sickness. This is because the current staffing assignment does not provide for staff holidays and training. Care is taken to ensure that agency staff are on duty alongside permanent and competent staff members so that children and young people receive reasonably consistent care and limited disruption.

New staff undergo an induction programme that meets the Children's Workforce Development Council standards and enrol on suitable qualification courses as soon as they become available. The home is committed to having a fully qualified work force; however, due to staff turnover and changes within the company, only fifty percent of the staff team, including the manager, are suitably qualified in caring for children and young people.

There is a comprehensive training programme that includes all core training as well as training in child development, attachment and supporting children who self-harm. Training in safeguarding, positive behaviour management and restraint are prioritised so that staff have the skills to deal with children and young people's challenging behaviour. However, few have completed training in supporting children who self harm. Staff complete training in first aid, medicine administration and food hygiene as part of their induction. Because of the recent staff changes, this means that a number of staff who prepare meals have not completed training in food hygiene and there are times when there is no member of staff on duty who is qualified in first aid.

Effective monitoring of the home by the provider and the manager ensures that shortfalls are addressed and that children and young people's well-being is promoted. It includes consultation with children and young people. The home does not currently have a development plan although the manager has unwritten plans about changes she wishes to make. Parents, social workers and other professionals say the home communicates well with them and keeps them informed of children

and young people's changing needs. One said: 'I am really impressed with them. The staff are really helpful and communication is good'.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.