

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC357455
Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Michael Gregg
Date of last inspection	20/03/2014

Inspection date	24/11/2014
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Previous inspection	good progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	outstanding
Outcomes for children and young people	outstanding
Quality of care	outstanding
Keeping children and young people safe	outstanding
Leadership and management	outstanding

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	outstanding
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This is a small, independent home where the proprietors, who run the home themselves, have purposely created a small, family based group home. Placements are long-term and an effective matching process regarding referrals ensures compatibility within the peer group. The home has a successful history of sustaining placements, re-engaging young people back into education and community life, as well as supporting them as they successfully move on into independent or semi-independent living.

The structure of the home and boundaries laid out are fully accepted by young people. They respond positively to the warm and nurturing environment created, where they feel safe and secure. This is a home with few behaviour management issues or the need for Police involvement. Issues, challenges and potential disruptive behaviour are all dealt with pro-actively, based on the strong and trusting relationships which develop between staff and young people. As a result, young people thrive socially, emotionally, physically and educationally.

Young people like living at the home and are all settled in their placements. They understand why boundaries are in place and consistently adhere to them. They feel well looked after and supported by a small dedicated staff group who provide a high consistency of care. This is recognised by young people, with one saying; 'This is

the best place for me. I like being here. I get really good support and I feel safe living here.' Another summed up his placement to the inspector as 'Awesome.'

The working partnerships established by the home with external agencies are outstanding, with the quality of those relationships being fully recognised. For example, a social worker writes; 'this is one of very few residential facilities I would use as a placing social worker. Normally, a residential placement would be seen almost as a last resort, this is not the case with this home. This home instils confidence in social workers placing complex children with them.' A senior psychotherapist writes; 'I have been visiting this home to see young clients, regularly over the past 4 years now. I have always been more than happy with the treatment of the young residents there and feel that much care and attention is given to the young people who live at the home. The staff team have very good morals and standards in the way the home is run and also about personal and resident conduct.'

The young people currently in residence, are all at different points of their journey through the home. Many have experienced severe disruption and chaos in their lives. One area of strength is in the way young people are supported to settle following their admission. They quickly buy into an enjoyable, alternative lifestyle to the one they may have experienced prior to admission. As a result they socialise more appropriately, gain new experiences which lead them into developing new hobbies and interests and re-engage positively with their education.

The proprietors look for and work towards continued improvement. This is reflected in the excellent monitoring of the home, both internally and externally which translates into effective planning for the future. This is reflected in the home's own development plans.

This inspection has not raised any major areas of concern and the report contains no requirements or formal recommendations. The proprietors discussed a number of areas they have identified for improvement and suitable plans are in place for this to be achieved.

Full report

Information about this children's home

This home is a private children's home owned and managed by a family partnership. It is registered to provide accommodation for up to four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
20/03/2014	Interim	good progress
26/11/2013	Full	outstanding
18/12/2012	Interim	good progress
21/08/2012	Full	outstanding

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **outstanding**

Outcomes for young people are outstanding. Young people consistently prosper socially, emotionally and educationally. This is underpinned by the structured, yet nurturing and supportive environment created by the small family group model, which has proved to be so successful for this home. The stability of long-term placements where individuality is recognised and supported, gives young people a feeling of security and safety.

This is a view supported by a range of external professionals who shared their views about the home. One says; 'This is an excellent environment for looked after children with challenging behaviour and a high level of need. I work with young people in many different care homes and I can honestly say that this home is one of (if not) the best that I have experience with.' Another says; 'It's a family run home which ensures consistency for the children. Very homely and welcoming, which has a positive impact on the children.'

Contact arrangements can be complex and at times unsettling for young people. However all aspects of approved contact are fully supported by staff who will work flexibly to meet individual needs and requirements. For example, in assisting with supervised contact. Young people confirm they are well supported by staff and raised no issues or concerns about the arrangements in place. This results in young people's contact arrangements being well met.

Based on their starting points, young people's educational outcomes are outstanding. All young people, even those with a history of failing to engage with education, are in full time education at a school that is local to the home. Excellent attendance levels are being achieved, which promotes educational achievement. Going to school consistently not only improves educational achievement but gives young people their own sense of achievement, as well as developing their social networks effectively. The home and school have developed excellent working relationships as well as having great respect for each other.

This is reflected in the positive response received about the home from the schools designated teacher for children in care, who says; 'I have nothing but the highest praise for everyone at this home. They are doing a fantastic job with the young people there. We currently have three in school in years 7, 8 and 9. All three have made progress in terms of their conduct, social skills and self-esteem as well as academic progress. Staff are very supportive of the young people and work consistently in their approach to address their various needs. This also includes supporting their academic achievement. Good communication is the key and this is excellent between home and school. We are in regular contact usually by email or telephone as often as twice or three times a day when there are particular issues, but

never longer than once a week when all is settled.'

Young people enjoy good health. Their everyday health needs are being well met by a range of community-based health services, giving them access to day-to-day health support. The home's willingness to advocate strongly for young people, along with well established links, allows for any specialist input that may be required, to be provided. Health needs and requirements are reflected in planning documentation, which is reviewed and updated regularly. This ensures individual health needs are assessed and fully met.

Young people take an active role in shopping, planning menus and food preparation. They are encouraged to try unfamiliar foods, appreciate different cultures and try international cuisine. Festivals and religious events are regularly celebrated. This often results in young people developing an interest in cooking, reflected by one young person who described his signature dish to the inspector. A healthy lifestyle, with a strong emphasis on fitness and diet is promoted consistently. Young people are not smoking, taking drugs or drinking alcohol which results in them enjoying improvements to their general health and fitness levels.

The home is well established within the community and continues to encourage young people to contribute positively to the community they live in. This is achieved through regular support of both national and local charities. This gives young people a wider perspective of life in recognising there are others in need of help who are less well off than themselves. Photographs displayed around the home record events as well as reflect and celebrate the personal achievements experienced by young people.

Developing greater independence and planning for transition starts early with young people's participation in the home's own independence training programme. No young people currently living in the home are of an age where transition is imminent. However, within the last year, the home has successfully prepared two young people who have gone on to live either semi or totally independently. This was helped by developing excellent working relationships with the adult placement team.

This is recognised by a member of the team who says; 'I worked with Woodside House Care, while they supported a young service user to prepare and move on to adult services earlier this year. In my opinion the service provided was extremely good, there was clear and professional communication between services throughout the transition process, as well as a good understanding of the emotional issues involved for the young person. The young person was well supported throughout.'

Quality of care

outstanding

Young people are receiving an outstanding quality of care. This view is supported by young people and their family members. For example, one young person says; 'The thing that I like about the care home is that staff are always there when you need to be supported and they are really kind and helpful that the rules are fair and you keep us safe.' The parent of one young person supports this view by saying; 'I cannot speak highly enough about the home, his needs are extremely well met.'

Young people benefit from the strong, trusting relationships and attachments that form between themselves and the small band of staff who look after them. Communication and consultation is a feature of daily life. Serious conflict and challenging behaviour is rare, even in times when young people do not get their own way. Reasoning and constant reinforcement of reasons for decisions dispels anger and frustration, allowing young people to develop greater tolerance and acceptance of other people's needs and point of view.

Young people say they are confident to make complaints, although none have felt the need to make any formal complaints since the previous inspection. Young people have access to the relevant information around complaints and children's rights, with helplines and contact details for external agencies well publicised. Promoting the rights of young people is well supported by the home. This is reflected in the two young people who are currently active members of a 'children in care' group.

On-going consultation stems from the excellent levels of communication which exists between young people and staff. Young people are listened to and their views are taken seriously. They are consulted formally through a series of questionnaires and meetings which take place regularly. However, young people feel they can make suggestions, choices and express opinions on a daily basis, rather than wait for a formal forum. This allows them to express views and make suggestions in an environment where they develop the confidence to do so, as well as giving them empowerment to control certain aspects of their own daily lives.

Individual needs and areas of risk are reflected in a series of high quality planning documents. When read collectively, they give excellent insight into the needs of young people, along with the plans and strategies in place to address those needs. Plans are updated monthly and sent to social workers to keep them informed. Plans are regularly reviewed by young people in key worker sessions, which ensures they have input and an understanding of the plans in place for them.

Since the previous inspection the home has introduced a social development profile for each young person. This is a comprehensive document completed every four months which details progress and need. It is also a useful tool in monitoring the development of independence skills. This is deemed to be an outstanding example of homes continuing desire to improve both the quality of care and outcomes for young people.

The home creates a warm, welcoming, child friendly environment, where staff and

young people actively enjoy each other's company. The standards of repair and quality of equipment, fixtures, furnishings and décor are high. Another example of the home continued development is reflected in the purchasing of new, high quality bedroom furniture and beds for each young person. Young people take pride in their bedrooms which are personalised to reflect their own taste. Photographs, mementos and personal belongings displayed around the home, reflect young people's positive experiences.

The range of shared activities is immense. Young people are provided with a wide range of activities that not only gives them new experiences, but often leads them towards taking up a new hobby or developing a new interest. For example, as a result of frequent theatre trips, one young person has joined and attends weekly, a local theatre group. This is helping him to develop self-confidence as well as expanding his social network.

Keeping children and young people safe outstanding

The home has not had any incidents of a safeguarding nature since the previous inspection, which in part, is down to the outstanding arrangements in place to safeguard and protect young people. Staff clearly understand their role and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. Excellent links and working relationships are established with a whole range of external agencies charged with keeping young people safe. As one professional put it as far as safeguarding and young people going missing are concerned; 'The home is low maintenance.'

Staff are aware of each young person's potential to bully or be bullied. Bullying in the home is not an area of concern to any of the young people living there. They confirm staff are always around to ensure arguments do not escalate into bullying incidents, which gives them a sense of security.

The strong working relationship between the police missing from home co-ordinator and the home has been maintained even though there have been no incidents of young people going missing since the previous inspection. As the co-ordinator says; 'Young people do not go missing from this home.' However appropriate procedures, which follow local protocols, are in place should such an incident occur.

Disruptive and challenging behaviour leading to serious behaviour management incidents, do not feature in this home. Strong relationships and the pro-activity of staff based on those relationships, means incidents and periods of upset are well managed. The ethos and culture of the home is to work through challenges and difficulties supportively, rather than punitively. As a result, serious behaviour management incidents in the home are extremely rare. However, should they occur, they are safely managed.

There have been no changes to the personnel who make up the staff group for some

years. This provides young people with stability and a consistency of care they benefit from. Appropriate recruitment and clearance procedures, which reflect current good practice, are in place to ensure that any new staff are suitably cleared prior to taking up their posts. The home also has a policy of re-checking staff every 3 years, which ensures young people are only being looked after by suitably cleared people.

A whole range of risk assessments linked to individual activities as well as hazards in and away from the home, protect young people. They understand how to exit the home in an emergency. Fire safety has been improved recently with the introduction of a new fire door in the hallway and with the installation of a new easy to release catch fitted to the front door. Safety checks to maintain a safe environment are regularly undertaken, with appropriate service contracts in place to ensure emergency and domestic equipment is safe.

Leadership and management

outstanding

The organisation and management of the home remains outstanding. The ethos and culture built over the years, based on the clear vision of the proprietors in how they wish to organise and operate the home, is fully supported by the staff group. The manager is experienced and appropriately qualified.

The support, supervision and appraisal of staff is taking place consistently. The staff team are suitably experienced. All apart from one are appropriately qualified, with arrangements for suitable qualification of that staff member currently being explored. Staff have opportunities for internal training which is complimented by external training, which is bought in. This helps to keep knowledge updated and current as well as developing and maintaining skills, which are effective in meeting young people's diverse and complex needs.

The monitoring of the home is excellent, with both internal and external monitoring taking place consistently.

Monitoring reports are of a high quality. They are detailed, evaluative and contain elements of quality assurance, which helps to ensure practice is accountable. Young people contribute to monitoring and can discuss their views. Information is cascaded and used in the written development plan for the home, which identifies areas of strength and areas to be improved.

The home's record of compliance is excellent. No requirements or recommendations have been carried over from the previous inspection. Since then the home has continued to move forward and progress, with a number of new initiatives being introduced. For example, with the introduction of the social development profile and with the purchase of new bedroom furniture and beds for young people.

This home is relatively unique in the way it is set up and organised. The vision of the

proprietors to create a warm, nurturing environment which looks to recreate a family experience, is meeting with considerable success. Young people are enjoying long-term stable placements where they can grow, mature and move towards living a more independent lifestyle at a pace that suits them. This is acknowledged by other professionals with one saying; 'The home feels like a family home. Young people's photos can be seen around the house reflecting family activities. All the young people seem to do a lot together whilst being supported with their independent interests and important activities.'

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
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.

Information 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 framework of inspection for children's homes.