

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC359846
Inspection date	08/05/2013
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	14/03/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 one of a group of homes operated by the same organisation as part of a tendering contract with a local council. This home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people with emotional and/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**.

This is a good service that provides positive outcomes for young people. The effectiveness with which the home provides personalised, well-planned care is a result of considered placement planning and staff commitment to meeting the individual needs of young people.

Individual young people's health needs improve by having access to focused health and psychological services that promote health and well-being. Plans for young people's future employment or education exist but the pace of progress presently reflects each individual's engagement and commitment. The changing needs of some young people generate particular uncertainty about the range of services they will require to progress. This means that with some young people anxiety exists about their future while they remain in the home. Most young people, with the support provided by care staff, develop the practical abilities and emotional resilience needed for the successful transition to independent living and adulthood.

Young people maintain respectful positive relationships with care staff enhancing the stability and quality of their placement. Regular placement planning sessions obtain their views and these influence and contribute to improvements in the quality of care.

Young people receive the full support of carers to maintain meaningful contact with people important to them. The home provides a comfortable environment for living. Young people say they feel safe. The practice of physical restraint and sanctions is rare as good behaviour is encouraged by praise and the use of individualised reward

schemes.

The management and operation of the home is generally good. Monitoring systems identify areas of practice such as recording quality and building maintenance that requires improvement to enhance and better evidence the overall quality of care provided to young people.

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
28 (2001)	ensure that a record is maintained in respect of each child that is kept up to date. Ensure that there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed (Regulation 28(1)(b))	11/06/2013
31 (2001)	ensure that all areas of the home are of sound construction and kept in good structural repair, specifically relating to the maintenance and decoration of girls bedrooms and bathroom (Regulation 31(1)(d))	11/06/2013
31 (2001)	ensure that each child is provided with sleeping accommodation that is suitable for his/ her needs including the need for privacy specifically by repairing broken door locks (Regulation 31(5)(a))	11/06/2013
32 (2001)	ensure by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals that the persons at the home are aware of the procedures to be followed in the case of fire. Confirm that these procedures are followed by ensuring consistent dated records are maintained within prescribed frequencies. (Regulation 32 (1)(e))	28/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that information about each child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. Children are actively encouraged to read what is written about them and correct errors, add personal statements and sign to confirm that they have done this, for example with their placement planning sessions. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Most young people demonstrate meaningful improvements in their confidence and self-esteem. This is reflected by the physical care they take of themselves and their engagement in meaningful activities such as education and training schemes. By helping young people recognise their own worth and abilities young people can socialise and develop friendships with their peers enabling them to feel more emotionally secure in their home. By forming consistent attachments with the caring adults in the home young people become more confident, emotionally resilient and aware of what they can achieve.

When compared to their starting point on admission to the home most young people make significant improvements in re-establishing school and educational placements. On-going placement support promotes meaningful achievement and attainment. One young person proudly returned home from school having sat a GCSE Science examination paper. Young people having completed their formal schooling demonstrate commitment to being in training placements rather than being unoccupied and unemployed. Practical support from staff and Connexions ensure such motivation is practically supported ensuring attendance at meetings. In this way young people improve life chances through further learning or developing practical skills to enhance their employability.

Young people understand the importance of healthy living and respond positively to the help available. They are encouraged and helped to attend health related appointments and while in the home eat a well-balanced diet, regularly reflecting cultural backgrounds. Input provided by specialist workers from external agencies help promote good emotional health, safeguard sexual health or address specific issues such as the use of substances. Young people acknowledge that this broad ranging support helps keep them safe and healthy, while also acknowledging the attraction and dangers of fast food.

Young people value being able to sustain contact with safe family and friends who are significant in their lives. The welcoming attitude of the home towards working with family networks enables young people to recognise that concerns about their welfare and safety are the principal focus of their placement. Some young people benefit from unsupervised contact that enables the maintenance of meaningful experiences with family. This assists young people to use their social skills to re-establish positive relationships.

Young people say they like the home they live in. They contribute to the daily running of the home by helping with general house chores and keeping their rooms tidy. They have a say in the décor of the communal areas and in that of their own personal space. Young people contribute ideas in their meetings letting staff know what the home could improve upon alongside choosing activities and meal planning. Young people receive a weekly allowance to spend as they choose plus opportunity

to increase this by demonstrating socially acceptable and helpful behaviour.

By following well considered plans established at an early stage of placement, young people receive excellent support by developing their self-help skills for independent living. Some ex-residents, formerly placed at the home having moved-on, now offer peer support for young people moving into their new independence placements. Robust planning and sensitive support for leaving the home provided by staff and a team of specialist workers ensures that young people are confident and well prepared when leaving the home. Observing this process demonstrates for other young people the longer term value of engaging with their independent support and Pathway plans.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from an established, competent and trained staff team who provide consistent nurturing care and practical support. Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, structured and effective, using humour and established relationships to diffuse difficult situations. Because of these constructive relationships behaviour is generally good.

Young people confirm that there are established ways to raise any concerns or make a complaint. They are usually happy with the way staff and the homes manager respond to any issues they raise and confident that any real concerns or complaints would be dealt with quickly. The homes complaints file includes informative information for young people whose first language may not be English and details about making complaints through advocates or their placing authority. No complaints have been received within the home since the last Ofsted inspection.

Effective behaviour management strategies are adopted in practice using easily understood praise and reward systems using the ability to enhance pocket money as an incentive. Young people understand that they may be counselled by their key workers during placement planning meetings as a consequence of any incident, inappropriate or risky behaviour.

The views and opinions of young people effectively influence the way the home operates. This takes place informally through everyday living and within weekly scheduled young people's meetings with staff taking notes. Young people are helped to understand how decisions are made particularly if it is not possible to act upon their wishes. Young people know that they can talk to other independent professionals and visiting advocates about any aspects of being looked after. Young people confirm they know how to make a complaint, and confidence within the staff team ensures young people receive support when raising concerns. In this way young people's rights are effectively promoted

The plans made for young people incorporates any views they make known to staff. Young people are encouraged to be actively involved in the development of their

plans while recognising that they can sometimes understate or change their views. This aspect of practice is not always well recorded or signed off by young people. Key worker recording emerging from on-going observation and assessment enables staff to evaluate the progress young people make and generate a report used to inform social workers and statutory reviews. Such plans include the development of skills and understanding that helps young people better understand and make the transition towards independent living. The approach taken is holistic including learning components such as budgeting, practical self-help tasks like practicing cooking skills within the home and social skills when accessing services in the local community. On-going placement planning targets areas of assessed underdeveloped need.

By following the provider's guidance and policies relating to health that promote physical and emotional well-being the medical and emotional health needs of young people receive attention directly or with the support of specialist agencies within the placing authority. Staff carefully address the particular needs of individual young people, for example by providing helpful advice about quitting smoking, eating a balanced diet and taking exercise to keep healthy. The involvement of other health professionals where necessary supports plans which identify particular needs that cannot be met by the staff team; such as the emotional support provided by trained therapists for understanding specific behaviour. By receiving regular training staff are equipped to deal with minor accidents or ailments and safely administer medication within the home.

Young people receive help, encouragement and practical support to attend and remain in education, but their actual attendance is erratic and at best satisfactory taking into account their starting point at the time of placement and the limitations placed on them by the available placing authority based educational provision. However, it is evident that staff work well in partnership with the Looked After Children's Education Service to improve opportunities and outcomes for young people placed in the home and glimpses of potential are seen to emerge.

The young people and staff looking after them enjoy some imaginative recreational pursuits and outings although some young people will grumble about the reasonable financial reins placed on expensive activities such as go-karting. The home offers positive experiences and opportunities that are often refused as young teenagers prefer to visit their friends in the community or play pool in the homes games room. Semi independence plans include opportunities for young people to access local community clubs without supervision. More adventurous visits planned include a city break to London and Scotland and outdoor adventure activities.

As the placement is focused upon the individualised needs of the young person, their needs including those related to their culture, religion, sexuality and background are well met by the homes location and diverse staff team. Through practice and experience all staff understand each young person's specific issues, needs and manner of expressing themselves. The home concentrates upon enhancing young people's esteem and quality of life by fully including them in the day-to-day decision making about all aspects of their placement while promoting inclusive, tolerant, socially acceptable behaviour in the wider community. Young people engage in

routines and activity designed to assist in developing tolerance and citizenship.

Young people live in a large detached house set on the edge of a residential estate that is domestic in style, generally satisfactorily maintained and decorated in colours and styles influenced by the young people living there. Some repairs are however needed to promote children's privacy by ensuring bathroom and bedroom doors can be locked and that damage in girls bedrooms and bathrooms is attended to. The home is well suited to its current purpose being furnished throughout to a good standard and of sufficient size to provide young people with sufficient communal space for relaxation and activity.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe and do not have concerns about their safety. They say that there is no bullying at the home. Staff understand and can implement child protection procedures and demonstrate a good understanding of how to practically keep young people safe and formally report any child protection concerns they may have to appropriate authorities.

Some young people do go missing from the home. A missing from home protocol is in place reflecting individual risk assessments for each young person and confirming relevant professionals and agencies are notified when such events occur. The home is making progress in reducing the frequency of this behaviour by developing good working relationships with parents and identifying circumstances when young people are likely to go missing from home. Records reflect that appropriate action is always taken to ensure the young person returns to the home safely.

A stable staff team having positive relationships with young people is effective in the management of young people's behaviour. Positive individualised behaviour management plans inform staff how best to support, advise and influence young people. The home has been effective in addressing challenging behaviour and settling young people into routines that bring about gradual but positive change. Although some young people face difficulties managing their behaviour, collectively staff provide consistent support without the need to use physical intervention. Staff receive training in the application of an approved methodology of physical restraint but in practice this is rarely used. No physical restraint has been necessary since the last inspection and young people are clear that its use is unnecessary in this home. Sanctions are seldom used other than when restorative measures are imposed to repair deliberate damage inflicted to belongings or the fabric of the home.

Young people benefit from knowing the staff who look after them. Only suitable adults are employed utilising the established company recruitment policy and practices. These confirm that all staff are thoroughly vetted before they start work with looked after children. All visitors to the home are effectively monitored because they are required to provide evidence of their identity and to sign a visitors' book confirming their purpose for visiting. These protective systems ensure that young

people are safeguarded from unauthorised individuals.

Health and safety is taken seriously by the home. The overall physical safety of the home is by review of any potential dangers through generic and specific risk assessments that cover all aspects of daily living and an on-going maintenance programme. These potential risks include those from fire hazards, from the behaviour of young people and from recreation or outdoor activities. Risk assessments take into account changes to the daily routine, the living environment and staffing levels within the home for managing behaviour. Suitable public and employee liability insurance is in place.

Fire alarm tests, fire safety equipment checks and fire drills are kept, but some have not been dated or completely recorded. The homes recently revised fire risk assessment was not forwarded to the local fire service in a timely manner and this omission could potentially compromise any emergency response. Young people, however, confirm that they practice regular fire drills and know the escape procedures to follow should the alarms sound.

Leadership and management

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

A qualified and experienced Registered Manager supported by a stable and committed staff team provide the home with the consistency required to offer young people adult support and security in their placement. Care staff deliver a good quality of care for young people enabling positive outcomes to be achieved. The manager emphasises covering the staffing rota without resorting to the use of casual staff.

Quality assurance systems which involve consultation with external stakeholders, such as placing authorities, along with more regular input from young people, staff and relevant others informs the managers day to day practice and development plan. Placing authority social workers comment positively about working as partners with the home to progress young people's placement plans. One social worker said that the home always kept her well informed about the young person's behaviour and progress.

The operation, function and staffing numbers are accurately stated by the home's Statement of Purpose document. Being able to sustain effective staffing levels underpins the nurturing nature of the on-going care provided that enables placement stability for young people. Management records and staff feedback confirm that regular supervision supports staff practice. Staff competence and commitment presently reflects the quality and consistency of day-to-day care. Care practice develops by staff having accessible company policies, procedures and guidance. Staff training opportunities further enhance personal development. The manager does however identify particular areas where some staff require additional support and guidance to improve aspects of their practice.

Young people's personal records are stored securely and kept confidential. They cover all matters required by the regulations, inform staff practice and confirm how

children can receive help and support to achieve.

The home benefits from monthly monitoring visits by an independent person and the manager undertakes in-house quality control monitoring. The frequency and focus of the latter determines that the staff supervision and appraisal process is used to address any practice shortfalls. This means that audit trails confirming how the manager has addressed potential concerns is not always immediately obvious.

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.