

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC372652
Inspection date	06/12/2011
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	21/01/2011
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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

This is a small private children's home caring for one young person usually aged from 12 to 17 years who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people live in a caring and supportive homely environment that encourages and enables them to make significant, meaningful progress across all areas of their life. Excellent, personalised care planning competently addresses the young person's specific needs enabling the attainment of positive outcomes by encouraging engagement, promoting self-confidence and developing emotional resilience.

Effective safeguarding processes and staff vigilance ensures the protection of young people from all forms of significant harm. Young people learn and practise strategies that will help to safely reintroduce them to the wider community. Young people are very complimentary about the quality of care and support they receive from their staff team. By interacting positively with their carers they are being well nurtured over their period of placement as evidenced by the development of the meaningful and trusting relationships with caring adults.

The views of young people are central to the running of the home through full involvement with the decisions that affect their lives and the home's daily routines. Young people significantly influence all aspects of the care provided. By being actively listened to, a sense of worth and placement ownership is engendered in young people. Care planning and practice is personalised and fully meets the specialist needs of young people.

A committed, competent and well-trained staff team ensures young people are well cared for. Having the right mix of skills and experience combined with a detailed knowledge of the young people they care for, staff provide appropriate informed support and guidance.

The management of the home is very effective. An emphasis on good quality childcare practice, supported by promoting young peoples access to full-time education supports the achievement of positive outcomes. The home effectively demonstrates its continuous improvement and development through its presentation, policies and practice. Comprehensive and informative monitoring systems constantly fine tune the quality of care ensuring that practice is always relevant, evolving and personalised.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people in the home are making excellent progress to develop their social and practical skills and by doing so improve their self-image. Assisted by caring staff and therapists young people are enabled to develop their emotional resilience, by learning to understand the reasons for their placement. By developing trusting relationships with their staff team young people are nurtured, can feel valued and begin to make informed choices about their future.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles by receiving help to take an active interest in and responsibility for looking after their own physical and emotional health, subject to their age and understanding. With consistent guidance and informed advice, young people help prepare a well-balanced diet and engage in activities that maintain personal fitness. For example, by going on long walks or visiting interactive places of interest. Through fully participating in key worker sessions young people are making well-informed choices about their health as they receive detailed information on a wide-range of matters. These include: personal health, emotional and social issues, including sexual health, relationships, and the dangers of substance misuse.

Young people are making very excellent progress with their education. They attend the provider's own registered school with transport and support from the home. Attendance is exceptional. Young people say that they enjoy school and choose to get on diligently with their learning. Homework and on-site learning matches young people's interests with the set curriculum. Records, school reports and young people's work on display in the home confirm that exceptional work is being produced. In particular, when considering the progress made from a starting point at the beginning of placement. Young people show that they understand the importance of learning. They are developing their skills and abilities through embracing education.

Young people benefit from directed and appropriate contact with their families as permitted by placing authorities. Staff support enables young people to retain, understand and normalise relationships with the important people in their lives at a level with which they feel comfortable. Staff ensure that contact is a controlled, safe and meaningful experience, which should be of benefit for young people.

Guidance and practical help in developing self-help skills prepares young people to become more independent in readiness for their eventual transition into adult life. The support given is appropriate to their age, level of understanding and practical ability. Young people are routinely involved in the running of the house including shopping, cooking, tidying and managing their own allowances while being encouraged to take appropriate levels of responsibility for themselves.

Young people's bedrooms are very tidy demonstrating that they can look after their belongings and show a sense of pride in their personal space. A young person said of the home 'it is warm and cosy and very welcoming and I like the layout of the

house.'

Quality of care

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

By living in a stable, nurturing and supportive environment where identified needs are practically addressed young people are helped to reach their potential. They confirm that they enjoy living in the home and feel well supported by the staff team who care for them. A young person said about staff 'there is nothing they could do better, they are amazing'. Staff are resourceful in developing ways to help young people help themselves, supporting them to make progress across many aspects of their lives.

The staff team promote high, but realistic aspirations for the young people they care for. Positive relationships and consistent day-to-day care reinforce the home's stability as a platform for individual achievement. Staff effectively assist young people to understand and address their past issues and behaviour to promote confidence and develop resilience. By improving self-esteem through accentuating good behaviour young people feel valued and view themselves more positively.

Young people recognise the emotional and personal benefits of complying with clearly expressed behavioural expectations and the home's routines. A nurturing infrastructure and busy timetable promotes significant bonding with staff and an appreciation of their children's home.

Care planning is comprehensive, being made explicit through placement objectives and individual expectations introduced at an early stage and being regularly reviewed. Young people are aware of the expectations made from them and the support offered to attain these goals. Placement plans effectively record and regularly review evolving objectives.

The specific needs, backgrounds, interests and views of young people are respected because staff have a good understanding about the circumstances leading to a young person's placement in the home. Young people receive a service that recognises their individuality, cultural background, and personal identity, including issues of gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation. Tolerance is practiced and promoted. Staff understand and embrace difference, demonstrating this in their day-to-day practice by giving importance to even the smallest issues that young people raise.

A formal review of the care placement takes place within the statutory timeframe ensuring that previous objectives are achieved, are appropriately recorded and consider any new developments or safeguarding concerns. Young people are empowered to be fully involved in the review of their plans. They attend review meetings and can fully contribute to the written submissions presented by their key workers. Young people confirm that they know about their placement plans and are helped to participate in their meetings.

Young people are actively consulted in a variety of ways to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings can influence the day-to-day running of the home. For example, being a single occupancy home young people receive ongoing supervision and support from staff with whom they can share thoughts. More formally, key working sessions explore placement objectives and issues that require further consideration by team meetings. This process enables staff to think about the delivery of more effective personalised care. By always taking the views of young people seriously, staff can help young people to understand why sometimes it is not always practical, safe, or possible to act upon their wishes.

Young people confirm that they know how to complain. They know that concerns they express are taken seriously and addressed, usually before they become a complaint. No complaints have been received. The manager and staff team are not complacent about the absence of concerns raised by young people and remain receptive to all issues, however petty, brought to their attention. Young people, especially those new to the home, understand that they can speak to social workers, advocacy services, or to their parents. Young people have access to a telephone; the home's portable landline, that enables them to maintain regular contact with family or significant people in their life subject to the conditions of their placement plan.

Young people have regular access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of young people's particular health needs ensuring that they are fully addressed. Staff assist young people in keeping healthy by encouraging routine health checks. Young people receive suitable medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell and staff are trained to safely practice emergency first aid. Robust policies and procedures ensure the safe management of arrangements for administering both over the counter and prescribed medication to young people.

The home's daily routine fully supports young people's participation in education and promotes school attendance. Staff support young people's learning by a combination of classroom assistance, supporting educational projects and helping with homework. Young people have access to educational resources within the home and can access the local library to research projects. Attendance is excellent because young people are aware of the importance of receiving education. The home's emphasis on personal achievement encourages young people to aspire to obtaining practical skills, certificates and qualifications.

Staff support and encourage young people to try out their recreational interests and abilities wherever possible. They facilitate access to a broad range of leisure activities providing meaningful experiences and variety to young people's lives.

Young people live in a semi-detached house that provides a normalising home for vulnerable young people. Being very clean, well decorated and furnished to a good standard makes it a comfortable environment in which to live. Despite only living here for a relatively short time young people are well settled and have a strong sense of involvement in the arrangement of their home. They confirm that they have

helped to decide on the décor of communal areas with artwork and have personalised their own rooms. There are no indications of deliberate damage and young people's rooms are always kept clean and tidy, which reflects a sense of ownership.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people live in a supportive and structurally safe environment effectively providing protection from harm, helping them feel safe and secure. Young people confirmed that they felt safe living at the home, are well supported by all of the staff and are not being bullied in any way.

The personal and emotional safety of young people is prioritised by the home. Staff are well trained in safeguarding matters. Staff confirm that they can recognise the signs and symptoms of differing types of abuse and know what they need to do to ensure effective safeguarding.

Young people receive practical advice about personal safety, including any potential risk from their peers or adults. Anti-bullying measures are well promoted and monitored vigilantly by staff, particularly in education settings. Young people are consistently encouraged to talk to their carers when they have worries or concerns. Staff work effectively with social workers and other agencies. This ensures the protection of vulnerable young people by sharing information and putting meaningful safeguarding plans and risk assessments into practice. Staff can access a company whistle blowing policy should they have any concerns about professional safeguarding practice.

The recognised particular vulnerability of young people is addressed by this single placement. Its semi-rural location makes it very suitable for young people who may be at risk if looked after in larger or urban settings. The risks young people may present or face in the community, including exploitation and discrimination, are well recorded and managed. Clear, regularly reviewed risk assessments and explicit placement plans explain how young people receive this support. The balancing of the need for protection alongside that of enabling young people to take considered risks, are seen as part of normal adolescent growth and development. This is carefully addressed by staff. Wherever possible young people are empowered to enjoy similar social experiences to their peers by engaging in recreational and interest based activities that promote socialisation and community integration.

The location of this home enables staff to manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement practice. Tested responses are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off-site excursion. The stability of the placement through the use of effective supervision and positive engagement between staff and young

people is however very effective, successfully negating this type of behaviour. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and can use this information to assist young people in managing their feelings and frustrations in an acceptable manner. A proactive stance deters young people from running off and putting themselves in risky situations.

The behaviour of young people living at this home is very good. Upon admission, young people are informed about how staff can help them and what the few house rules are. The children's welcome guide reiterates this key information. Through day-to-day living young people confirm that they know the norms of the placement and the standards of behaviour that are expected. Emphasising positive behaviour with young people produces good results. Young people regularly revisit their individual behavioural plans with key workers to discuss the ongoing expectations and any difficulties they may experience. Staff consistently apply strategies that encourage and support young people to expand their usual acceptable behaviour in all situations, both in the home and the wider community.

There are effective responses available to staff for the management of infrequent challenging behaviour by the use of an approved physical restraint methodology. The need to use these measures is extremely rare with improved recording enabling staff and the home's management to review circumstances and effectiveness of such practice. Young people say that they know about the circumstances in which these measures may be used while acknowledging these are always in extreme circumstances and only used to ensure they remain safe. Young people express no concerns about the rewards and sanctions used by the home.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. An extensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and preventive checks protect them. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and young people know what to do in case of an emergency, especially when they are newly admitted to the home. The recruitment and selection of people working at the home follows robust company procedures and checks. These ensure only safe adults look after young people. The manager is vigilant in ensuring that all appointed staff possess the relevant skills, competencies and qualifications to meet the needs of looked after young people. Appropriate systems are in place to ensure that suitable checks and supervision is in place for visitors to the premises. Young people remain safe and effectively protected by using these procedures.

Leadership and management

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

This effectively managed home promotes the safety and best interests of young people. It comprehensively meets the aims of its Statement of Purpose with young people, families and social workers being made aware about the services and support the home provides by reference to this document. The young person's guide is readable and delivers useful information and pictures of what the home provides in an age appropriate friendly tone.

The manager and staff team demonstrate a very strong commitment to delivering extraordinary childcare practice tailored to address the individual needs of each young person they look after. This practice enables impressive progress to be made across the many aspects of young people's lives including: school attendance and educational achievement, their emotional development, self-help independence skills and by keeping safe.

The valuable use of reflective practice and ongoing document review assists the manager and staff team in developing and improving the service. Significant importance is placed upon listening to and acting upon feedback provided by the views of young people, therapists and social workers. Young people make their views known through whatever media best suits their communication style and feelings at any particular time.

The ongoing detailed external and internal monitoring of the quality of care is being effectively used to inform those practical changes required to ensure young people are kept safe and receive the best possible outcomes. The manager places appropriate emphasis on the sustained improvement of the service based on its previous performance and enhancing the progress of young people. The annual development plan is a 'work in progress' document, ensuring the home is realistic in its aspirations and target setting across the range of outcome areas.

A very competent staff team who exhibit a wide range of skills and experience look after young people. All staff possess the relevant qualification for working with young people. The team skills and abilities match the needs of young people living in the home very competently. Staff display high levels of enthusiasm and find creative ways in engaging meaningfully with young people and their families.

The manager and staff are committed to providing young people with the stability, consistency and security needed to keep them safe. The staffing complement in place to accomplish this task is sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way. Staffing numbers currently provide sufficiently for the levels of support needed to promote recreational activities, visits and for attending appointments.

Staff receive a comprehensive training programme that addresses the specific safeguarding and health needs of this placement alongside the more pastoral and generic needs of young people. Training provides staff with the statutory input, skills, qualification and knowledge to do their jobs competently.

Staff are very well supported by their manager. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations placed on them for providing high quality and informed childcare practice. Collectively staff confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always responsive. Staff regularly receive one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals of their practice that informs their ongoing learning and personal development. Team meetings take place monthly encouraging the whole staff team to discuss the general operation of the

home, considering service improvement and to importantly reflect on young people's progress. An ongoing staff review of the revised national minimum standards and inspection methodology helps them to evaluate how their practice can be improved further, confirming their commitment.

The home's written records are very securely stored and provide a comprehensive but practical picture of changing needs of individual young people that include diversity, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including all relevant documents from social workers. The manager is proactive in following up any shortfalls from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.