

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC372652
Inspection date	30/05/2013
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	13/12/2012
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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.

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 **outstanding**.

The children's home is making a positive difference to young people's lives and provides them with the opportunities to achieve outstanding outcomes. Young people are thriving living in an exceptionally caring and supportive home environment that enables them to make excellent progress. Young people enjoy extremely strong and trusting relationships with staff. They have a strong sense of safety and are protected from significant harm.

Staff are highly committed and demonstrate a high level of skill and understanding which enables them to meet the young people's complex needs on a daily basis. Staff have high aspirations for all young people and work strenuously to promote young people's personal growth, and social and emotional development. Young people's needs and views are central to the running of the home. Staff actively encourage young people to express opinions and to make choices and to enjoy a full range of social opportunities and experiences. All aspects of care planning and practice are highly personalised. It is tailored to comprehensively meet the individual needs of each young person and take into account their characters and backgrounds. Staff actively work in a coordinated way with young people, their family, social workers, health professionals, schools and the other professionals. This ensures that young people get the right help, guidance and advice.

The manager provides strong leadership and works hard to improve the quality of care and support. She fully understands the strengths of the service and effectively uses the quality assurance systems to develop the service further. There is a strong emphasis on providing a very high standard of professionalism and childcare practice.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people make exceptional progress in all areas of their lives, while living in this home. They make significant and continuous improvements in their educational attainment. They learn to take responsibility for their own general health and personal safety. They develop emotional strength and forge sustainable relationships, based upon mutual respect and regard. They grow in confidence, self-esteem and self-respect. Young people enjoy strong and trusting relationships with staff and feel secure enough to express their wishes and feelings. Risk taking behaviours, including self-harming behaviours, have reduced markedly as relationships have developed and more constructive ways of dealing with anxieties have been learned. The young people are willing to learn from their experiences and mistakes, and accept guidance and advice from the adults caring for them. The young people are generally friendly and sociable and take pride in their appearance and achievements. Social workers are very positive about the progress young people make in the home, particularly, when viewed from their individual starting points.

The home promotes a positive ethos that fully embraces diversity and difference; as a result, young people learn to appreciate the significance of differing values and cultures and to have respect for other people. This ethos also promotes positive behaviours, assists young people to understand the consequences of their actions, and encourages alternative and more acceptable responses.

Young people's attendance and educational attainment are excellent, which has done much to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience. They are making excellent progress in developing their knowledge and skills and working hard to gain required qualifications, to enable them to progress to college in the next school year.

Young people are effectively prepared for adult life. They make the most of the opportunities they have to develop practical skills, including budgeting, shopping, cooking, washing clothes and by taking responsibility for personal healthcare. They are able to express their views in an open, assertive and appropriate manner. They play an active role in the running of the home and take part in the decisions about their lives and their future plans.

Young people benefit from regular and appropriate contact with their families and friends. This is enabling them to maintain and develop relationships with the people who are important in their lives. They look forward to seeing their family and spending time with them. Staff work really hard to ensure that young people find seeing their families a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. Staff are very aware that young people and their families sometimes may find seeing each other stressful and make sure they are suitably and sensitively supported.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive an outstanding quality of care that makes a positive difference to their lives. They thrive while living in a very stable, caring and supportive environment. Staff provide them with consistency; as a result, young people feel very settled and have a strong sense of belonging.

Staff place the well-being of individual young people at the centre of their practice. They have an excellent knowledge of the young people they work with, ensuring that the young people receive very good individual support and guidance. Staff have consistently high aspirations for the young people in their care and are fully committed to enabling young people to lead happy and fulfilling lives. Young people have strong and trusting relationships with staff, and they comment that they feel valued and accepted as individuals. Staff are skilled at engaging appropriately with young people and provide the support and reassurance needed to reduce their anxieties; this has significantly reduced self-harming behaviours.

Young people's placement plans provide a comprehensive picture of all their personal needs and the support they require. Staff ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their cultural background and identity. Staff work exceptionally well in partnership with parents, social workers, school and health and education professionals to promote young people's welfare. Care files contain health information and details of each young person's general practitioner, dentist, optician and specific external specialists. Staff support and encourage young people to access external health professionals in line with their identified need. Clearly maintained records of appointments with health professionals evidence that the physical, emotional and mental health needs of the young people are effectively met.

Young people live in a very healthy environment where their individual health needs are identified and services are provided to meet them. Staff support young people to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them, for adulthood. The staff group provides the right balance between nurturing and enabling young people to develop appropriate self-reliance. Young people have regular meetings with their key worker to discuss progress and any issues of concern. As a result, they feel valued and actively influence the running of the home. Young people state that staff are approachable and acknowledge their rights and truly value their contributions.

Young people's progress is shared regularly with placing social workers and, where appropriate, with parents, to ensure that they are up-to-date with developments. Placement meetings and reviews take place at appropriate intervals. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their reviews and care planning. This ensures that all decisions are known and understood by all and can be implemented effectively into the daily living arrangements. Up-to-date care plans include all required information regarding young people's needs. This ensures that staff can deliver care that focuses on the individual needs of each young person.

Clear policies and procedures, effectively applied by a highly trained staff team,

effectively safeguard young people's health. Vigilant checking and dispensing of medication ensures accurate and up-to-date records, which evidences safe practice. Excellent care planning supported by up to date and accurate assessments of risk ensures that staff have access to good up-to-date information about the young people in their care.

Staff ensure that the daily routine of the home supports young people's school attendance. They have created a stimulating environment that promotes young people's educational attainment. Young people have easy access to books, computers, art materials, games and other educational resources. Staff support young people's education and liaise regularly with the staff at the organisation's school; this ensures that young people achieve very good educational outcomes.

Staff encourage young people to take part in a range of activities and follow their individual interests and develop their talents. Staff make every effort to ensure that young people have the same social opportunities as other young people of the same age, including going to the theatre, accessing local youth clubs and going away on holiday. Young people have every opportunity to try new activities. This increases their experiences and helps them to enhance their confidence and their social skills and abilities.

Young people present well, wear appropriate clothing and have sufficient belongings to meet their needs. They receive pocket money and appropriate allowances to help purchase clothing and toiletries of their choice.

Young people live in a suitably-designed and very comfortable family house in a quiet residential neighbourhood. It is handy for the shops, public transport, schools and community amenities. The home also has a vehicle that means that young people have convenient transport for activities, shopping and contact visits with family. The house is very clean, well maintained, and decorated and furnished to an exceptionally high standard. Young people have good quality furniture in their bedrooms and ample storage for personal clothes and belongings.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has a good range of detailed policies and procedures covering aspects such as prevention of bullying, complaints, safeguarding and behaviour management. Staff are knowledgeable about these policies and they are effectively implemented. Staff receive good training with regular updates in all these areas, which enables them to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse.

Young people confirm that they feel safe living in this home. They feel able to talk to any member of staff if they are worried. Staff give young people's safety the highest priority and they are well trained in safeguarding. Staff work effectively with young people and the safeguarding agencies to promote young people's safety.

The home has a good set of individualised risk assessments for each young person in residence. Risk assessments are proactive in identifying potential risks and providing effective strategies to help to minimise these. These cover aspects of the young people's potential behaviour, the environment and the activities they wish to undertake.

Staff promote a positive culture of managing behaviour, with a focus on dealing with issues quickly to avoid escalation. Young people confirm that the use of sanctions is minimal, fair and consistent. Staff manage young people's behaviour by building good relationships and by placing a strong emphasis on promoting positive behaviour through praise and talking through any problems in a constructive way. Staff help young people to increase their levels of self-control and awareness of the impact of their behaviour. They work hard with young people to help them reflect on significant incidents. This strengthens attachments, encourages young people to better manage their future behaviour and shows them that they are supported and valued.

Young people confirm that the use of physical interventions are very infrequent, only being used as a last resort, by staff, to ensure safety for all. The resolutions of most incidents are through the skilful application of staff support and the sensitive use of conflict resolution techniques. The home's manager monitors each intervention, ensuring that the intervention is necessary, applied correctly and comprehensively recorded. She also ensures that young people are aware of their right to complain, and to receive any medical attention if required or requested. She is also aware of the need to ensure that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed. No physical interventions have taken place since the home's last inspection.

Staff receive regular and wide-ranging training in safeguarding. As a result, they demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the action they should take should they have any concerns about a young person's safety or well-being. Effective working with external partners, such as the Local Authority Designated Officer, ensures the continued development of staff's knowledge and understanding of child protection practice.

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. No episodes of young people being missing from care have occurred since the home's last inspection. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing, however, and use this insight to assist young people in managing their feelings and frustrations in a more productive manner; this deters young people from running off and putting themselves at risk.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. The home has a good health and safety regime, which ensures that all fire precautions and equipment servicing are

conducted routinely, consistently and within timescales required. In addition, staff ensure that young people know what to do in case of an emergency through regular fire drills. Good quality risk assessments of the whole children's home environment have been conducted, which identify all potential sources of harm and include actions needed to address them. These assessments are recorded and regularly reviewed.

The organisation's effective recruitment procedures ensure the careful selection, recruitment and retention of staff. This ensures young people are safe and have a staff team who know them well. New staff are comprehensively vetted prior to their deployment in the home and before having unsupervised access to any young person. There are also suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is very effectively and efficiently managed in their best interests. The home meets the aims and objectives of its Statement of Purpose. Young people, parents and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides.

The Register Manager is highly competent, very experienced and suitably qualified. She is an effective leader who consistently promotes high expectations for providing excellent childcare practice. As a result, staff clearly demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering exceptional childcare practice tailored to the individual and personal needs of the young people they look after. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the excellent progress young people are making.

Young people confirmed that they know that they have a right to complain and some have done so. None expressed any concern with the home's complaints procedure and all felt that their concerns were taken seriously by the staff. The home has a good policy and procedure in respect of young people wishing to raise complaints.

Young people are looked after by very competent and well-supported staff. They provide young people with a high level of consistency and an exceptional quality of care. They are enthusiastic and caring and work well together to promote young people's welfare. The numbers of staff on duty are always sufficient to meet the needs of young people. Staff are suitably qualified and receive high-quality training to develop their individual skills and knowledge relevant to the young people they are caring for. Staff are effectively supported and guided through excellent professional supervision. Also team meetings take place every month to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home, to look at ways to improve the service they offer, to reflect on young people's progress and to decide how best to support them.

The staff team are positive about the training and induction programme and feel it equips them to meet the needs of the young people. The company's training

programme is well established. The staff team receive comprehensive training that is specific to the needs of the young people in residence. Individual training plans are created for every staff member, who initially receive a comprehensive programme of induction, followed by mandatory training that is refreshed at regular intervals.

The home exceeds the requirements of regulations and national minimum standards. It shows a strong capacity for continued improvement based on its performance in the development of positive outcomes for young people. The manager has a realistic understanding of the strengths of the service and the areas for further development. The provider and manager use strong quality assurance practices to monitor the running of the home, including consultation with young people, to take action to improve outcomes for them. Any weaknesses are promptly addressed. The manager ensures that staff clearly understand their responsibilities and know what is expected of them.

Young people's case records are clear, up-to-date and stored securely, and would contribute significantly to the young people's understanding of their time in care if they choose to access these documents in the future. The registered person notifies the appropriate authorities about all significant events relating to the protection of young people accommodated in the home. No requirements or recommendations were made at the home's last interim inspection and none have been generated following this inspection.

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.