

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC379357
Inspection date	27/06/2013
Inspector	Stephen Halliley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/12/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is part of a large private children's care organisation and is registered to accommodate three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home offers short, long-term and emergency placements. The home has a school on site, and this is registered with the Department for Education.

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**.

Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their lives while living in this home.

Their views are consistently used to inform the quality of care provided and it is clear they feel they are a part of the home and that their input is important to staff. The willingness of staff to listen to and respond to young people has supported the development of some strong relationships; young people talk very positively of the staff who work with them.

Young people are clear they feel safe in the home and that staff are consistently proactive in ensuring their welfare and safety. Young people understand the need for routines and boundaries; are clear that constant staff input has helped them turn around behaviour and has contributed to them being able to progress to where they are now. This staff input is guided by individualised care and placement plans which are regularly updated and reviewed in partnership with young people.

As a result of this joined-up approach, young people have achieved positive outcomes including maintaining college placements, accessing apprenticeships, successfully identifying future placements and greatly increasing their self-awareness around personal safety, relationships and healthy living.

A newly appointed Registered Manager has a clear knowledge of how the home is functioning and has a detailed development plan in place to continue the progress

already made.

Shortfalls are identified concerning the clear and full recording of sanctions given to young people and the recording of remedial action taken to address issues around fire safety.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of discipline in a children's home a written record is made in a volume kept for that purpose which includes the date, time and location of the use of the measure and the effectiveness of the use of the measure (Regulation 17B (3) (d) (f))	31/07/2013
29 (2001)	ensure the registered person maintains in the children's home the record specified in Schedule 4 and ensures these are kept up to date; this specifically relates to recording remedial action taken to remedy faults identified during fire tests. (Regulation 29 (1))	31/07/2013

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make significant progress in all aspects of their lives while living in this home. They are very aware of the issues that have led to them living in the home and have made huge strides to address these and to plan for the future.

One social worker commented, 'I attended the review which was very positive and demonstrated the immense changes in my young person. The desired outcomes have been achieved and it's due to the commitment from staff in ensuring my young person's needs received priority. My young person is very proud of their achievements and has developed improved self-confidence.'

Young people's health needs are consistently met through access to a range of health professionals. They also learn how to take responsibility for their own health needs through well planned key work sessions. As a result young people can self-medicate, where appropriate, have a clear understanding of healthy eating and are knowledgeable about the potential risks linked to substance misuse. This ensures

young people are able to make educated decisions about their lifestyle choices.

Young people are doing extremely well in either college placements or apprenticeships. College placements have been identified for young people due to leave the home in the new area where they will live to ensure the qualifications they are undertaking can be completed. Achieving qualifications and securing references will be useful as young people plan their longer-term futures.

Young people contribute fully to the day to day running of the home and are actively involved in community-based activities. Young people have recently started to donate blood, showing an increased awareness of the needs of others and a desire to play a full and responsible part in society.

Young people have contact with their families in line with individual plans and through agreements with social workers. For some, this is increasing and has contributed to transition plans and the identification of future placements. For others, this is an area to be further explored though staff comment that, 'We give lots of support to help young people cope emotionally and they have done remarkably well in that respect. They do understand what the issues are and I feel they are remarkably strong emotionally.' This further evidences the development of emotional resilience and maturity of young people in this home.

Young people are very well prepared for the transition to adult life. They comment that they have: 'Been learning independence skills including cooking (a varied menu), budgeting and saving money, shopping, laundry, ironing, opening and maintaining a bank account and using public transport.' These skills will enable them to function in the wider community and to move into adult life confident in their abilities to make a positive contribution to society. One independent reviewing officer commented that this is an: 'Excellent placement which has done wonderfully well for keeping our youngster safe and setting her up for a good future.'

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from good relationships with staff and with each other. Interactions with staff are positive, relaxed and appropriately humorous. This includes asking young people about their day, discussing plans for the weekend and reminding young people of the need for contact arrangements to be confirmed by parents. This ensures young people feel staff are interested in them, that everyone knows what activities are planned and that boundaries and expectations are reinforced. This latter point also serves to reassure young people that staff are concerned for their welfare and safety by confirming their whereabouts at all times.

Young people are actively involved in planning the redecoration of the home thus ensuring they live in a home in which they feel comfortable. Their involvement in this also ensures they know that their views and ideas are important to staff. There is a clear procedure in place for young people to make a complaint should they wish to

do so. They are also confident that their complaint would be taken seriously, be dealt with quickly and appropriately and that they would be told the outcome of their complaint. This ensures young people live in an environment where they feel confident to raise concerns should they need to do so.

Young people have individualised, detailed and regularly reviewed care and placement plans in place. These guide the work of staff to ensure that individual needs are addressed and fully met. Young people are actively involved in updating these plans and so have a good awareness of the progress they have made. They are also encouraged and supported to attend their review meetings which ensures they are involved in the process of decision making which will affect their future.

Young people have good access to a range of health professionals and regular appointments are made and kept. Young people are encouraged to manage their own medication if it is appropriate for them to do so as part of developing their skills for independent living. On-going work is also being done with young people who smoke to educate them about the health implications of this. Young people state that: 'Staff have held lots of key work sessions about smoking, looking at the health issues and they have involved the stop smoking clinic and we have tried e-cigarettes.' Staff continually address this issue and young people have reduced the amount of cigarettes they smoke. This shows that staff are actively encouraging young people to live healthy lifestyles and that this is having an impact on their lifestyle choices.

Young people are consistently supported to find the right education or work placement for them. This means they have started some courses and then withdrawn, but staff have worked hard with all young people to help them find their niche. Young people are now completing college courses or undertaking apprenticeships. Attendance at all placements is very good and young people are developing a clear sense of how the college courses and work placements can help them plan for their longer term futures.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are kept safe by the health and safety checks which are carried out, the risk assessments in place and the structures and routines which are in place within the home. This includes appropriate staffing levels at all times and support for young people when doing activities outside of the home. This leads to young people commenting that they, 'Definitely feel safe here and know the staff do lots of things to keep us safe including keeping the home secure, risk assessments and making sure we understand the e-safety booklet.' Young people take age appropriate, managed risks as part of their development and increase their knowledge of how to keep themselves safe from cyber-bullying.

All health and safety checks are carried out diligently and rigorously. There is good recording of these and also when defects are noted such as issues with fire doors.

While remedial work has been undertaken, there is insufficient detailed recording of this to show the lines of accountability and the work which has actually been carried out.

There has been one instance of a young person going missing since the last inspection and this is a very rare occurrence for this home. Records of this incident are extremely detailed and show a concerted and well-coordinated response between the home, parents, police and the placing authority. This was entirely in keeping with the home's policy on managing unauthorised absence. Staff practice is further informed by the provision of individual absence policies for each young person living in the home outlining any previous history of absconding, free-time arrangements and when staff supervision is necessary. Together with a protocol agreed between Norfolk Constabulary and the service it is clear all possible actions are taken to ensure young people return quickly and safely to the home.

There have been no incidents of restraint since the last inspection and only two sanctions have been given showing the home has been settled for a period of time. Sanction records are clear and legible but the format is not conducive to accurate recording. This has led to gaps in the recording of the time, date and location of behaviour and the effectiveness of the consequence being given. The new Registered Manager has recognised this point and has amended the layout of the sanction book to fully meet requirements and to simplify the recording process for staff.

Thorough and robust vetting procedures of new staff and consistent use of the visitor's books to monitor people on site protect young people from the possibility of harm or abuse by adults who work with them or who visit the home.

Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and the actions they should take if any allegations or suspicions of abuse should arise in the home. The Registered Manager also has a very clear understanding of when issues may need to be referred to outside agencies such as Ofsted, Local Authority Designated Officers or children's services. This ensures that should an issue arise young people would be fully supported and protected by staff taking appropriate action.

Leadership and management

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

A new Registered Manager has recently been appointed to this home. In recent months she has supported the deputy manager with the day to day running of the home before moving in from another home within the organisation. This has not had any noticeable impact on young people or staff as the home has continued to function well and to provide high quality care for young people. Indeed staff comment that, 'The managers are very knowledgeable and supportive and always make sure they are available to us,' and, 'I feel very confident in them and am well supported by them. My development is important to my managers.'

This professional development of staff is supported by a clear training programme being in place. This ensures all staff have the core knowledge and skills to work consistently and safely with young people. Regular formal supervision of all staff by suitably experienced and qualified staff further supports this development. Staff report that, 'Supervision supports me in being able to do my job to the best of my ability,' which ensures young people receive the highest level of service staff are able to provide.

The home has continued to move forward since the last inspection. The new Registered Manager has ensured that all staff fully understand the systems in place. Internally, the home has a new fish tank and has benefited from redecoration in a number of areas. Staff are very aware of the expectations placed upon them by managers and young people and have responded very positively to this. While the manager is aware of the strengths of the home, the commitment of the staff, and the clear evidencing of work being carried out, she is also aware there is room for further improvement. Accordingly, there is a detailed, considered and achievable development plan in place to continue to help staff and the home to progress in the coming year.

No complaints have been received since the last inspection evidencing the stability of the home and the fact that young people, parents and social workers are happy with the service.

The Registered Manager carries out thorough monitoring of the home on a monthly basis. The home regularly sends out questionnaires to parents and social workers to supplement the telephone contact they have. There is very clear consultation recorded with young people who are regularly asked for their input about the home and the way things are being run. This ensures that the home can review feedback from all stakeholders and take a holistic approach to reviewing and improving the quality of care provided. Regular monitoring by an external visitor supports the internal systems with the visitor noting that, 'Young people enjoy growing up in a stable and effectively managed home.'

All records held in the home are stored securely and confidentially to ensure only people with appropriate authority can access them. Records about young people are comprehensive and provide young people with a detailed account of their life in the home should they wish to look at these at some point in the future.

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.