

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC386505
Inspection date	05/03/2013
Inspector	Denise Jolly
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	25/07/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This service is a private children's home, registered to care for up to three children with emotional and 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**.

The children's home is making a positive difference to young people's lives. Although the home re-opened only in January of this year, the care provided by staff has enabled young people to make good progress. Staff provide personalised and well-planned care that takes into account the individual needs and wishes of each young person. Social workers say staff promote positive outcomes for children and are skilful in supporting them through difficult periods. Experienced and qualified staff offer structure, support and guidance to young people that values and celebrates their individual qualities and experiences.

Staff listen and respond well, as young people contribute their views and ideas about the quality of care in the home. They are fully involved in decisions about their lives and plans for their future. Staff encourage cooperation in daily living, and foster relationships based on mutual respect, care and tolerance. Young people appear settled in the home, and demonstrate improved outcomes in stability of placement, emotional resilience and social relationships. Additionally, staff help them to reduce risk taking behaviour, and increase learning and achievement. Young people benefit from staff who work well with their families and relevant professionals to ensure they get the right support to meet their needs.

Young people say they feel very safe in the home. Staff knowledge of how to safeguard young people, and excellent care practice ensures they promote their welfare and safety at all times. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the risks young people face, and take positive action to ensure risks are minimised and safely managed. Young people enjoy positive and trusting relationships with staff. This means they feel confident in the support available to

them, and respond well to praise and encouragement given for their efforts and achievements.

The newly appointed, qualified Registered Manager places a clear emphasis on providing a high standard of care for young people, and young people thrive in the home. Despite shortfalls for record keeping, leaders and managers are effective at tackling weaknesses and securing improvement.

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)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home a record in a permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3; notably a copy of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child, the placement plan, and any statement of educational needs. (Regulation 28 (Schedule 3, (12) (18))	30/04/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure each child's Placement Plan is monitored by a keyworker who ensures that the requirements of the plan are implemented in the day-to-day care of that child, in particular regard to emerging risk assessments (NMS 25.2)
- ensure the result of all statutory reviews and reviews of Placement Plans are recorded on the child's file, including education reviews, and individuals responsible for pursuing action arising from the reviews are clearly identified (NMS 25.8)
- ensure children receive prompt feedback on any complaints raised and are kept informed of progress. (NMS 1.6)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people receive support that recognises and meets their individual needs. They

benefit from comprehensive and detailed planning, that helps them to identify ways to improve outcomes in their lives. Young people work very well with staff to identify barriers to their success, and contribute to plans for their immediate and longer-term futures. When possible, young people maintain contact with their families, to ensure continuity in their lives. Young people understand the importance of healthy lifestyles, and staff support them to take responsibility for their own health. They have prompt access to professional consultation and guidance on a range of issues including sexual health, relationships and emotional well-being. Young people attend routine health care appointments. They begin to engage with specialist health professionals, encouraged by staff, to improve their mental health. Over time, they learn to recognise when they need additional support, and ask staff for help to reduce behaviour that causes them harm.

Young people are making progress with their education. They benefit from support when they are not happy at school, as key workers promote their views in meetings with education professionals. If they are unable to attend school, they participate in work with home tutors. This ensures young people continue to learn, and have opportunity to take exams to measure their progress. Young people continue safe and positive contact with a range of family members, when it is beneficial to do so. They maintain regular contact with the children's home during return visits, and this provides them with the support they need to experience successful relationships with family members. This enables young people to maintain and enjoy important relationships in their lives.

According to their starting point, young people develop skills important to their future success. They work hard to understand the building blocks necessary to attain their goals for independence. They share domestic and cooking tasks with staff, negotiate group activity choices, and learn to think about the needs of others. They work in partnership with staff to understand responsibility for making positive choices and effectively manage the challenges of daily living. Additionally, young people contribute their thoughts about the running of the home to staff in one-to-one meetings or lively group discussions. This provides them with appropriate control for everyday decisions, and creates a sense of belonging.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from qualified and enthusiastic staff dedicated to understand their individual needs and wishes. Staff skilfully support young people to contribute to their individual placement plans. Staff use informal meetings and activities that encourage young people to reflect on their feelings and behaviour. Staff ensure young people's views are accurately and clearly presented in regularly reviewed plans of care. However, not all local authority placement and education plans are up to date or in place. Managers request relevant documents from social workers, to ensure that the home supports young people to progress against approved plans and actions. Staff get to know the young people very well, and are fully committed to enabling them to understand and overcome their difficulties, and achieve positive

outcomes.

Young people contribute to the development of the home by sharing their views and ideas in regular house meetings, group meal times, and individual consultations. At teatime, everybody sits down to eat together to enjoy a relaxed opportunity to discuss the day and plan for the evening. Staff provide young people with positive and constructive models of communicating views, and they challenge behaviours that offend others. As a result, young people enjoy each other's company, and say that the home is a place where they feel cared for, and can relax.

Managers and key workers spend time with young people, to ensure they communicate directly about matters of importance to them such as family contact or safety concerns. In this way, most issues are resolved informally. Young people are confident that adults listen to them, and they receive feedback about any complaints they make. Independent adults, such as social workers provide additional support when young people are not satisfied with the feedback given. However, staff do not always record the outcomes of such visits and this minor shortfall prevents young people from having a complete record of their time at the home. However, due to the efforts of staff, young people say they are very happy with the quality of care they receive.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical and emotional well-being. They have good access to community health services. Staff sensitively support young people to use specialist services such as mental health professionals, or sexual health resources. In order to promote continuity of care, staff arrange for young people to make appointments with health professionals they have met previously. This means young people experience consistency during times of transition, and continue to engage with important medical care.

Staff closely monitor young people's well-being, to ensure they are aware of and are able to respond to any emerging issues or concerns. Consequently, staff have an excellent understanding of young people's specific health needs and ensure these are met on a daily basis. Young people continue to thrive, as they begin to come to terms with past trauma, and overcome patterns of behaviour that previously limited the progress they make. Parents say that because staff offer such consistent and thoughtful care, young people sustain progress, and are helped to overcome difficult periods in their lives.

Staff ensure the daily routine of the home supports young people's participation in education. Staff take an active interest in young people's education. They liaise effectively with education professionals to identify appropriate educational opportunities for young people. They work collaboratively with education staff to ensure young people have the opportunity to achieve their academic potential. Staff promote the importance of education, and young people say they are challenged to improve negative attitudes to school, although at times progress is slow.

Staff and young people plan lots of activities together. Staff and young people say they gain great pleasure from sharing everyday experiences such as shopping and

cooking. Staff provide support for young people to engage in a range of typical teenage interests such as going to concerts or day trips to places of interest. This enhances the range of skills and experiences available to young people, and improves their confidence and self-esteem. Young people live in a quiet neighbourhood, close to local amenities. They are encouraged to take ownership of the home and treat it with respect and care. They personalise their bedrooms and take care of their possessions.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel very safe, and live in a safe environment where staff do their utmost to protect them from harm. Staff are alert to potential risks, and encourage young people to let them know if they have any worries or concerns. Young people demonstrate they are confident to talk to staff about situations that may cause them harm. They trust staff to act promptly to help keep them safe. Staff use their knowledge and understanding of how to protect young people from abuse or exploitation, and when necessary foster good links with other child protection professionals.

Staff prepare risk assessments for young people that identify strategies for helping them to stay safe. However, staff do not always record in detail all the information they have about individual risks young people face. For example, generic categories such as drug or alcohol misuse do not include specific areas of concern that have resulted from individual incidents involving young people. The impact on young people's safety is low, because of effective verbal handovers between staff and open relationships with young people. However, risk assessments are not consistently up to date. When staff are concerned about young people's safety they take decisive action to make sure young people are protected and receive the support they need, including increased counselling and supervision. Staff communicate in a timely manner with all relevant parties about emerging risks for young people. They provide young people with good advice, guidance and support. As a result, young people grow in confidence, understand the consequences of risk-taking behaviour and have increasing skills in staying safe.

Young people settle well into the home, and demonstrate improved stability by reduced incidents of going missing. Staff are alert to impulses and behaviour that may lead to situations where young people go missing. They discuss with young people the reasons they do this and do their best to discourage them. When young people are missing, staff use clear procedures, including liaising with the police, and visiting known addresses, to ensure young people's welfare is protected and they return quickly and safely.

Staff are regularly trained in behaviour management, and present excellent role models in positive problem-solving techniques. They make good use of de-escalation approaches to deal with challenging behaviour constructively, and do not use physical restraint. Staff rarely use sanctions, because they guide young people

through difficult situations to recognise how they can improve. However, on the rare occasion staff impose a sanction, young people record their views, and frequently accept responsibility for their actions. Staff have a good understanding of, and a genuine interest in, the dynamics of relationships between young people. Relationships in the home demonstrate tolerance and concern. Young people say they really enjoy the emotional warmth and security offered by staff. This enhances the safety and well-being of young people.

Staff at the home have transferred together from another service in the organisation. The organisation maintains robust recruitment and selection procedures that help prevent unsuitable people from having access to young people. When necessary, managers carefully induct and support new staff into their role, to ensure they acquire the skills necessary to care safely for young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home has been providing highly individualised care to young people, since it re-opened at the beginning of this year. A newly appointed, qualified and experienced Registered Manager leads a qualified and lively staff team who demonstrate a strong commitment to delivering a high standard of care practice. Young people live in a home that places their needs central to service development, and celebrates the progress they make. Enthusiastic and competent staff have consistently high aspirations for young people, enjoy their company, and are proud of how well young people are doing. The effectiveness of this approach is evident in the positive progress young people are making in many aspects of their lives.

The home demonstrates capacity to improve by meeting all requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. The home now provides comfortable and homely accommodation that young people enjoy living in. Improvements to policy and procedural guidance for staff, the Statement of Purpose and children's guide now reflect change achieved in line with a published development plan. This includes better access to training for staff in specialist areas, such as young people who self-harm or who are at risk of sexual exploitation. This enables a consistency of staff approach that supports improved outcomes in the lives of young people. Managers ensure staff respond effectively to the changing needs of young people, by regular and detailed staff meetings, supervision and appraisal.

The home meets the aims and objectives of the new Statement of Purpose. Young people, their families and social workers are clear about the services and support the home provides. The provider and manager regularly monitor the operation of the home, the quality of care and outcomes for young people, in partnership with young people and the professionals who support them. Results demonstrate the positive impact and value that living at the home has had on the lives of young people, who grow in confidence and maturity.

Young people's written records are securely stored. Plans of care contain mostly up-

to-date information about young people, and include their views. Parents say they are fully involved in creating and reviewing plans of action to meet identified need. The records provide a picture of individual young people's experiences and inform plans for their future. Monitoring by the visitor on behalf of the provider and by the Registered Manager identifies shortfalls in service provision, such as out-of-date placement plans. However, actions to improve record keeping in the home have not been effective. Some current local authority placement plans and statements of special educational need for young people at the home are absent from the files. Due to the efforts of staff, this has not affected young people's welfare or opportunities for their development.

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.