

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC398393
Inspection date	08/11/2012
Inspector	Trevor Hall
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to two young people with emotional 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**.

Young people experience outstanding care because staff provide consistency, stability and a safe nurturing environment. As a result, young people achieve excellent personal growth. The trusting and sincere relationships observed between young people and staff are based on mutual respect and honesty. Young people receive excellent on going care and support from a care team that are dedicated, hard-working and committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for them.

Young people enjoy living in a home where all aspects of care planning and practice is highly personalised and tailored to address fully their individual needs. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their families and other agencies to ensure that the right help, guidance and services are enlisted to meet children's existing and emerging needs. Highly personalised placement plans effectively capture all these aspects of young people's care. Priority is given to helping young people develop their sense of self-worth and to help them to maximise their educational and personal development. Young people's diverse needs are met because they are supported by an experienced and well trained staff team.

Highly competent and well-trained staff, with the appropriate skills and experience, effectively support young people. Having a detailed knowledge of the young people they care for enables staff to provide the practical guidance and emotional support required. The home provides the stable, consistent and nurturing environment that young people need to grow, thrive and prepare for their future.

Safeguarding young people's welfare is placed at the highest priority in terms of both the health and safety of the environment and promoting their physical and mental well-being. Very effective internal and external monitoring processes provide continuous quality assurance which helps to maintain the home's outstanding standard of care and assists in promoting the on-going development and improvement of the service.

The home has an energetic, motivated and well qualified manager, who leads by example and is ambitious to achieve the best possible outcomes for the young people in her care. Rigorous monitoring of care delivery, through well-maintained recording systems ensures that both strengths and weaknesses are identified and effective remedial action is taken. Effective use of these monitoring systems enables the effective review of the quality of care provided. The Registered Manager places a strong emphasis on providing a high standard of child care practice through continuous improvement and development.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a written record of all medication, treatment and first aid given to children during their placement. This refers to maintaining accurate records of medication given and stocks maintained in the home. (NMS 6.15)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people clearly benefit from the security and structure that exists within this home. Boundaries are consistent and help to give young people a feeling of security without denying them their individuality. They enjoy positive relationships with the staff group, based upon mutual respect and positive regard; this helps them to improve their self-image and build up their emotional resilience. The extremely competent staff team have successfully created a nurturing environment that has well-defined boundaries, but remains both homely and supportive.

Staff are sensitive and understanding when young people talk about their life experiences and family relationships. Staff work very well together to address young people's individual needs and promote their physical and emotional well-being. There is a strong emphasis on developing trusting, honest relationships so young people can talk freely about their experiences and be realistic about their future aspirations. Young people are successfully encouraged to express their feelings and emotions. 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.

Clear policies and procedures effectively applied by a highly trained staff team effectively safeguard young people's health. 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.

Care files contain health information and details of each young person's General Practitioner, dentist, optician and specific external specialists. Young people live in a very healthy environment where their individual health needs are identified and services provided to meet them. Staff support and encourage young people to access external health professionals in line with their individual needs.

Young people benefit from an informed, coordinated and planned approach to meeting their needs, which includes successful partnerships with other health services and support agencies. Records of appointments with health professionals are clearly maintained, ensuring the physical, emotional and mental health needs of young people are well met. Staff support young people to take charge of their own health care to better prepare them, for adulthood.

The management and staff of the home, promote appropriate pride in high levels of educational attendance and attainment, while recognising the difficulties that young people have experienced in sustaining education placements prior to living at the home. Highly committed staff support young people's education and liaise regularly and effectively with the schools they attend, this ensures that young people achieve positive outcomes. Young people speak positively of their education and the support and encouragement they receive.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the excellent care and support provided by staff and they make exceptionally good progress.

Young people know how to make a formal complaint if they are not happy about something, although this has not been necessary for some time. They also have access to a children's rights and advocacy service if they wish to discuss any matters outside of the home. Young people meet with staff regularly as a group and in one-to-one meetings to talk about how the home is running and sort out any issues raised, quickly and informally. Young people are confident that any complaint made will be addressed quickly and fairly.

Staff are exceptionally good at supporting young people to attend school and achieve. They advocate on behalf of young people to make sure they have an appropriate educational placement. Staff attend relevant meetings and events such as parents' evenings. They also maintain regular contact with schools, enabling day-

to-day issues to be addressed quickly. This supports young people's continuing attendance and achievement. Young people's achievements and progress are celebrated by the home. This helps promote their self-esteem and confidence. Young people have made very good progress at school from their starting points of when they moved into the home. The social worker for one young person, on none attender prior to admission, said their educational progress has been 'excellent.'

Young people benefit from having individual placement plans that detail how their needs will be addressed. Staff have a very good understanding of the young people's needs and backgrounds and care for them in line with their placement plans. Young people play an active role in the development and review of their placement plans. Clear and measureable outcomes, make evaluating the effectiveness of the plans and the progress made by young people comparatively easy.

Staff work exceptionally well with social workers and other professionals to make sure young people's plans are implemented consistently. This helps to ensure continuity of care and good outcomes for young people. Social workers contacted, reported excellent communication with the home and described the outcomes for their young people as 'outstanding' and 'better than I could have hoped for'.

Staff are exceptionally child focused in their practice and they have a very positive view of young people. They place a strong value on making positive relationships with young people and make sure they are listened to and respected. Young people are actively involved in decisions about the running of the home.

Staff endeavour to work constructively to reduce the incidences of negative behaviour displayed by the young people. The young people have made significant progress in this regard.

There are good arrangements for storing medication, however the administering and recording has on occasion, failed to meet best practice standards. Medication has not always been recorded at the point of delivery and monitoring of stock has failed to notice recording errors. Young people benefit from the very good links the home has with a range of health care services and staff have specific training in how to support and promote young people's health and wellbeing.

Young people benefit from living in an environment that is comfortable, homely and meets their needs. The house is decorated and furnished to a very high standard and its location provides a safe setting for young people.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home has outstanding arrangements in place which safeguard the young people who live there. Detailed risk assessments are completed to help minimise any risks to young people. These are monitored regularly and thoroughly by the manager and

staff team in partnership with placing social workers and young people themselves. The individual care plans put in place for each young person also help to identify any risks and protective factors. The home has clear reporting procedures in place should any safeguarding concerns arise. The staff team have access to agreed safeguarding guidance and are trained to help protect young people from abuse. Social care professionals believe strongly that the staff team understand how to protect children and safeguard their welfare and also help children to understand how to protect themselves. These arrangements are effective in helping to ensure that young people are cared for safely. Young people themselves confirm that they 'feel safe' living at the home.

The staff team use the agreed protocols and procedures in place to help ensure that if young people go missing from the home, they are found and returned to the home, as quickly as possible. Young people going missing from the home without staff approval is infrequent. Overall, young people living at the home enjoy very positive and constructive relationships with the staff team.

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, receive any medical attention if required or requested and that social workers and, where appropriate, parents are fully informed.

There are robust and effective arrangements in place which help to ensure that the home remains a safe place for young people to live. Regular safety checks and risk assessments are completed by the staff team to help minimise any risks to young people. The staff team are also trained to know what to do in any emergency and they practice this with young people. There are good arrangements in place to complete required checks on any new staff team members that may come to work at the home. Visitors to the home are closely supervised by staff to help ensure that children are kept safe when they are present.

Leadership and management

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

The management team is skilled, experienced and appropriately qualified. Managers keep up-to-date with developments in legislation and care practice and use forums such as team meetings to share these with staff. The manager leads by example and provides clear and highly effective leadership, setting very high standards for the service.

The manager and staff have a strong commitment to improving the service and outcomes for young people. For example, central to the home's ethos is the clear emphasis on reflective practice. This helps staff, in individual supervision sessions and team meetings, to critically examine ways of working with young people and explore how they can be more effective. The arrangements for monitoring the quality

of care and outcomes for young people are exceptionally robust and inform how the service can improve further. Feedback from young people, social workers and other professionals is also used to identify strengths of the service and areas for development. There is a comprehensive development plan setting out how the home intends to build on and improve the service it currently provides.

The home has a clear accessible and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and young person's guide giving young people, their families and placing authorities' comprehensive information about the services offered by the home. Staff rotas are flexible enough to ensure that the changing needs and circumstances of young people are consistently met. Staff shortages are managed well and changes are kept to a minimum. The team work hard to minimise the impact of any changes experienced by young people. The Registered Manager has a clear commitment to providing consistent care that helps young people sustain attachments with staff they know well.

The staff team is well qualified and experienced. Staff have access to a comprehensive and wide ranging training programme which helps ensure they have the knowledge and skills to meet the needs of the young people. Staff receive excellent support in regular, high quality formal supervision. This, and highly effective provides staff with a good understanding of each young person's needs, how to support them and how to keep them safe. Highly personalised care and support is delivered to each young person as a result of excellent staffing levels, and the effective allocation of these throughout each shift.

Staff and young people are actively involved in the local community and the home has good relationships with its neighbours.

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.