

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC398393
Inspection date	22/12/2011
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	17/03/2011
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2011

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.

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 independent provider owned children's home for up to two young people of either gender from eleven to 17 years. The home cares for children and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

The views and responsible behaviour of young people actively influence the running of the home. Planning for care and staff practice is personalised and comprehensively addresses the assessed needs of each young person. Staff practice is undertaken in a considered and coordinated way with young people, their families, social workers and the other agencies involved in their lives. This ensures that all of the young people receive the levels of help and support they require. Young people are fully involved in the decisions that affect their lives and the day-to-day running of the home. Staff listen to and act upon young people's views about their care provided by enlisting suggestions and complaints. By always being taken seriously, these views influence staff practice when they do not compromise the safety of young people.

Competent, well-trained staff, who demonstrate the right mixture of skills and experience offer effective care for young people. Staff have a detailed knowledge of each young person they look after, consistently providing the individual support and guidance required. Staff confirm through their practice their understanding that vulnerable young people require a stable and nurturing environment to thrive, develop and prepare for independence. The home is effectively managed, and the Registered Manager assigns significant importance upon providing a high standard of childcare practice and the continuous development of the home. The manager makes effective use of independent and in-house monitoring systems to inform the quality of care provided to enhance and improve the outcomes for young people.

Two administrative shortfalls have been identified that do not adversely impact on the overall outstanding service being provided to that enhance the outcomes for young people by this home.

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 all records of staff supervision (including the managers) are always signed off by supervisor and supervisee (NMS 19.5)
- ensure that an up-to-date development plan is provided for the home. (NMS 15.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people in the home are making extremely good progress to develop their social and practical skills and through their efforts are also improving their self-image. Most young people, with the support of caring staff, have been enabled to develop their emotional resilience by understanding the reasons why they are in this placement. By forming trusting relationships with their staff team, young people feel nurtured and valued, establishing a base from which they can make informed choices about their future.

Young people enjoy healthy lifestyles and generally take an active interest in, and responsibility for looking after their own physical and emotional health, subject to their age, understanding and level of engagement with the home. Some smoke, but this is actively discouraged, and help is available to help young people give up tobacco use. With practical guidance and informed advice, young people can enjoy a healthy and well-balanced diet and engage in activities that promote physical exercise, for example, by attending the gym, ice rink or using the home's own adjoining field to practice mountain bike skills. Young people are helped to make well-informed choices about all aspects of their health through key worker sessions, such as sexual health, forming safe relationships and the inherent dangers of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse.

Young people are making excellent progress with their education. They attend either the provider's own registered school or mainstream college education with transport help provided by the home. Attendance is admirable. Young people say that they enjoy college and the responsibilities and opportunities it provides. Records, reports and young people's education projects confirm that some exceptional work is produced when considering progress taken from each young person's non-existent starting points at the time of placement. Young people have been helped to understand the importance of learning enhancing their life chances and are now able to develop their skills and abilities through education.

Young people benefit from directed and appropriate contact with their families where this is permitted by placing authorities. Practical staff support enables young people retain and normalise positive relationships with the important people in their lives. Staff are careful to ensure that contact is a controlled, safe and an enjoyable experience, which has benefits for young people. Young people receive help preparing them to become more independent in readiness for the transition into adult life. The support provided is appropriate to age, level of understanding and practical skills. 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. One young person confirmed how he received help and practical advice in his desire to return to further vocational-based education in his placing authority. Some young people, having moved on to independence, retain regular contact with the home confirming their progress and the positive relationships they developed while living in the home.

Quality of care

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

Young people are receiving help to reach their personal goals and individual potential by living in a nurturing, stable and supportive environment where their needs can be practically addressed. They say that they enjoy living in the home and feel well supported by the staff team looking after them. When asked what could be improved in the home one young person replied 'nothing'. Staff are resourceful in finding ways to help young people help themselves and support them to make progress in all aspects of their lives, for example, by helping them understand and maintain tenuous personal relationships.

Staff set realistic aspirations for resident young people. Establishing positive relationships and providing consistent day-to-day care, reinforces the home's stability and facilitates an environment that nurtures and celebrates individual achievement. Young people receive help to understand and address any personal issues, with input from therapists if required, to promote self-confidence and build emotional resilience. Maintaining the feeling of personal security and well-being in placement helps young people improve social behaviour in public and understand the benefits of complying with social norms.

Young people are consistently encouraged to recognise the personal benefits of complying with clearly expressed behavioural expectations and the home's routines. A nurturing structure and active timetable encourages bonding with staff and a strong attachment to the home by young people. By forming sound, safe relationships within a generally calm environment young people are enabled to resolve everyday problems and disagreements quickly.

Young people are aware of the expectations made from them and the support on offer to assist in their individual achievement of goals. Care planning for young people is explicit by the setting of placement objectives and regular review of progress. Placement plans effectively record aims and objectives and in-house informal recording makes the recording of achievement understandable and interesting to young people. Each young person is valued as an individual and the onus of individual achievement is a strong feature of the home. Differing needs, backgrounds, interests and views are respected and often celebrated on cultural special days. Young people individually receive a service that recognises their personal identity, including issues of gender, faith, disability and sexual orientation, within a tolerant environment. Staff make every effort to understand and embrace difference, demonstrating this in their day-to-day practice by giving importance to

the particular concerns and issues that young people raise. Staff have a comprehensive knowledge of the children and young people they work with and use this to ensure each has their needs properly addressed and that any difference they have are respected by everyone in the home. The rights and responsibilities of young people are practically promoted and understood by reference to services such as 'Rights 4 Me'. A statutory review of each young person takes place regularly ensuring that placement objectives are being met, are appropriately recorded, and consider any important developments such as safeguarding or contact issues. Young people are empowered and encouraged to be fully involved in the review of their plans. They will attend review meetings or fully contribute through the written submissions presented by their key workers and the home's manager.

Young people are actively consulted in different ways to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings influence the day-to-day running of the home, for example through daily dialogue with staff, more formal children's meetings and most regularly through key worker sessions which provide input directly into staff meetings. Young people are encouraged to be aware of others who are less fortunate to develop their empathy and improve citizenship, usually through school endeavours and fund-raising events for charity. Individual achievements are well recorded in the home's photographic archive, displays and albums. Staff always take young people's views seriously while practically helping young people understand why sometimes it is not always practical, safe or possible to act upon their wishes. One young person said he knew that staff could not address his wish list for a greater array of electronic gaming equipment in the home.

Young people know how to complain and express any concerns. By being acted upon quickly, concerns avoid becoming a complaint confirming they are taken seriously by the manager and staff team. None of the young people spoken with had any cause for concern about the home or their care. Young people have had explained to them that they can speak to social workers, advocacy services, or independent visitors should they wish. Young people confirm that their key worker meetings and general daily interactions provide them with many opportunities to discuss any concerns openly and without fear of criticism. They also have access to a telephone, either a mobile or the home's portable landline, that enables them to maintain regular contact with family or significant people in their life subject to their placement plan. The home's notice board and the young person's guide identifies the contact numbers for advice services.

Young people live in a healthy environment that actively promotes their physical health and emotional well-being. An active and healthy lifestyle supported by a cosmopolitan nutritional diet and access to recreational facilities in the community helps keep young people healthy. All staff promote the importance of a healthy eating and a good diet. Balanced homemade meals, made from fresh ingredients and access to plenty of fresh fruit ensures that young people see this as an important feature of daily living. Young people say that the menu is wholesome and varied. They receive practical advice about the connection between a healthy diet and keeping fit. Young people have regular opportunity to assist in meal preparation and recreational cooking with help from staff and they fully acknowledge the importance

of sociable, communal meals taken with staff at the dining table. Some practice independence skills by budgeting, shopping, preparing and cooking their own meals with staff help and advice.

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 health needs ensuring that they are fully addressed. Young people receive routine health checks and access to professional medical advice and treatment when they are feeling unwell. Staff are trained to competently administer first aid in an emergency. Safe and effective procedures ensure staff effectively manage the 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 regular attendance both in mainstream college or the providers own educational facility. Staff support young people's learning by a combination of classroom assistance, supporting learning projects and helping with homework. Young people have access to books, art materials and other educational resources, including internet access, within the home. Young people attending mainstream education receive practical assistance with travelling and course work in preparation for national examinations. Attendance is excellent. The emphasis on personal achievement encourages young people to aspire to obtaining practical skills, certificates and valuable qualifications, achievements of which they are rightly proud.

Staff support and encourage young people to focus their recreational interests and abilities wherever possible. They facilitate access to a broad range of leisure activities providing meaningful experiences and choice to young peoples lives. The home's garden provides ample access to green space developed into garden space and a cycle track with obstacles. One young person positively commented on his ability to get a season pass to the local ice skating rink.

Young people live in a comfortable detached, rurally located modern designed house that provides a safe environment for vulnerable young people who may need time away from a community setting to address their issues. The house is very clean, well decorated and furnished to a good standard throughout. Young people living here become settled and have a strong sense of involvement in the activity, layout and content of their home. They confirm that they have helped to decide on the décor of communal areas and have personalised their own rooms. Attention is being given to occasional signs of wear and tear around the home. Young people's rooms and communal areas are kept clean and tidy confirming their sense of ownership in the home.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

By living in a supportive and structurally safe environment that provides effective

protection from harm, young people can feel safe and invest in the home. They 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.

Staff are well trained in safeguarding, confirming that they can recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what they need to do to ensure young people are effectively safeguarded. Young people receive practical advice about personal safety, including any potential risk from their peers or adults. Staff monitoring ensures anti-bullying measures are effective. Young people will talk to their carers when they have worries or concerns and will report any shortfalls. Staff work cooperatively with social workers and other agencies to ensure vulnerable young people receive protection by sharing information and putting safeguarding plans into practice where these are necessary to promote physical and emotional safety. Staff can access a whistle blowing policy should they have any concerns about the professional safeguarding practice of others. By adopting these measures the safety of young people is prioritised.

The vulnerability of young people susceptible to risky behaviour and their need for stability can be addressed by this placement. Its semi-rural location makes the home suitable for young people who will be at risk if looked after elsewhere. The home's proximity to community recreational facilities and amenities do however empower eventual socialisation. 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 evolving placement plans confirm young people receive protection from harm.

Staff demonstrate that they are able to balance the need for protection alongside enabling young people to take considered risks that are seen as part of normal adolescent growth and development. In this way young people are able to enjoy similar social experiences to adolescents of a similar age by engaging in recreational activities, such as sports days, community activities and integration into mainstream education.

The semi-rural location of this home enables it to manage unauthorised absence extremely well. Established protocols and positive relationships with the local police complement day-to-day practice. Robust responses are in place should young people go absent from the home or from an off-site excursion. The stability of the placement using effective supervision and positive engagement between staff and young people is very effective. Staff remain aware of the potential reasons why young people may go missing and use this information to assist young people to manage their feelings and frustrations in an acceptable manner. A proactive stance frequently deters young people from running off and putting themselves in risky or illegal situations. The home is realistically proactive in supporting some more mature young people to balance their desire to maintain friendships in the community with their looked-after status.

The behaviour of young people living at this home is usually very good. Upon admission, young people will be informed about how the home can help them and

what the few house rules are. This key information is reiterated by the young person's guide and on the home's notice boards. Through day-to-day living, young people confirm that they know the rules of the placement and what standards of behaviour are expected. The emphasis being placed on positive behaviour is confirmed by the application of minimal sanctions or physical interventions. Young people regularly revisit their individual placement and behavioural plans with key workers to discuss the ongoing aims of their placement.

There are effective measures 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 good recording enabling staff and the home's management to monitor and review the circumstances and effectiveness of such practice. Children and young people are aware of the circumstances in which such measures may be used while acknowledging these are always in extreme circumstances and only used to ensure they are kept safe. Young people express no concerns about the rewards and sanctions used by the home.

Young people live in a physically safe environment. They are protected by an extensive range of health and safety procedures, risk assessments and preventive checks. 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 adhere to robust company procedures and checks to ensure young people receive their care only from safe adults. The home's manager is diligent by ensuring that all appointed staff become equipped with the relevant skills, competencies and qualifications to meet the needs of looked after young people. Rigorous systems are applied to ensure that any visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised while on the premises. The safeguarding of young people is ensured further by the use of the provider's well-practiced procedures.

Leadership and management

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

The children's home is managed effectively. It confidently promotes the safety and best interests young people. The Statement of Purpose document provides young people, their families and social workers with a clear description of the services and support provided being provided by the home and the registered provider. The young person's welcome guide is readable and delivers useful information and pictures of what young people may expect, presented in an age-appropriate format.

The manager and staff team demonstrate a strong commitment to providing quality childcare practice tailored to address the individual needs of each looked-after young person. This encourages them to make significant progress across the many aspects of their lives, including educational attendance and achievement, sustaining their emotional development, practicing independence skills and keeping safe.

The use of ongoing reflective practice assists the manager and staff team to further develop and improve the service provision. Utilising detailed external and internal monitoring of the quality of care provided, the manager can identify any changes required to ensure young people get the best possible care, thereby promoting positive outcomes. The manager places emphasis on the sustained improvement of the service based on its previous performance. The present development plan format does not fully confirm the progress being made by the home. Considerable importance is however placed upon enlisting and acting upon feedback provided by the views of young people, staff, parents and social workers to shape the provision made by the home.

A very competent staff team who exhibit a wide range of skills and experience look after the children and young people. All established staff provide relevant qualifications for working with young people. The team skills and abilities match the needs of young people living in the home. Staff are dedicated and find creative ways to support the diverse needs of young people.

The manager and staff are committed to providing young people with stability, consistency and security needed to keep them safe. Staffing numbers provide sufficiently for the levels of support needed to promote recreational activities, visits and attending appointments for all the young people. All staff receive a comprehensive training programme that address specific behavioural needs of children in this placement alongside the more pastoral needs of young people. Training provides the statutory input, skills, qualification and knowledge for staff to be effective.

Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and the high expectations placed on them for providing quality and informed childcare practice. Collectively staff confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and responsive. Staff receive regular one-to-one supervision and annual appraisals of their practice that informs their learning and development however these are not always signed off by both parties to confirm they take place. Team meetings take place monthly encouraging the whole staff team to discuss the general operation of the home, how the service may be improved and to reflect on each young person's progress

The home's written records are securely stored, data protected and provide a comprehensive but practical picture of individual young people's needs, including diversity, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. Young people's case files are well maintained, as the manager is proactive in following up shortfalls from placing authorities.

Equality and diversity practice is **outstanding**.