

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC400355
Inspection date	18/07/2013
Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/02/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 home provides accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is operated by a private company.

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 benefit from being looked after by a consistent and competent team of staff who have a good understanding of their needs. Staff give young people a good level of individualised care and support which enables them to make good progress overall from the start of their placement in the home. Professionals involved with the home are very positive about the way young people are cared for and the progress they make.

Young people are helped to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Their individual health needs are met. They are able to make progress in education because staff work hard to ensure that they attend school regularly and recognise and praise their achievements.

Young people are safe and feel safe in their home. They enjoy positive relationships with staff. This benefits them emotionally and helps to increase their sense of confidence and self-worth. Young people report that they are able to talk to staff. They feel they are listened to and that their views matter. They are supported to develop their social skills and their behaviour improves as a result of the way staff work with them.

The home is managed effectively in order to ensure that young people achieve positive outcomes. The manager provides good support and leadership to the team of care staff. He regularly monitors the quality of care given to young people and the progress they make. He takes prompt action on any shortfall that is identified through the monitoring process in order to improve the service for the benefit of young people.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to one aspect of the manager's reports on the conduct of the home and an issue of refurbishment in the bathroom.

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 the home is well maintained throughout. In particular ensure that a blind is fitted to the bathroom window (NMS 10.3)
- ensure clear and effective procedures are in place for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular demonstrate how, within Regulation 34 reports, the views of children and partners are being evaluated and used to promote continuous improvement and development. (NMS 21.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good progress overall from their starting points on admission to the home. Staff work hard to engage young people and they develop good relationships with them. This helps to promote young people's confidence and sense of self-esteem which in turn supports their general progress.

Young people's physical and emotional health needs are identified and resources are made available to ensure that they are met. Staff have established effective links with health agencies such as the looked after children's nurse, child and adolescent psychology services and substance misuse teams. These arrangements enable young people to benefit from access to additional services when a need is identified. Young people are supported to develop and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Staff make sure that their diet is healthy and they encourage young people to exercise. Young people enjoy various activities that promote exercise, such as horse riding, cycling and swimming. Staff help young people to understand how things such as smoking and using alcohol or drugs affect their general and emotional health. They actively encourage young people to stop smoking and they have successfully helped some young people to significantly reduce their use of substances. This has had a positive impact on young people's health and general well-being.

The home's arrangements for managing medication are robust, protect young people and ensure that they have medicines when they need them.

Young people's attendance at school and engagement with education is generally good, with some young people managing very high levels of attendance. This

maximises their opportunity to achieve. Professionals report that young people have made progress in education over time in the home. Young people themselves have aspirations and plans for their future after school.

Care staff regularly consult young people about their own care plans and about the routines of the home. There are regular house meetings where young people can talk about plans for the home and any issues that there are in the group. Young people report that they help to write their own placement plans and they attend their reviews. This gives them the opportunity to understand and to be involved in the decisions that are made about their lives.

Staff help young people to maintain links with their families, in line with their agreed local authority care plans. This contact with people, who are important to them, supports young people's sense of identity and benefits them emotionally. One professional said that the support the staff had given to family contact had contributed to the 'massive improvement' in family relationships for one young person.

Young people report that they are helped to learn to be more independent. Staff encourage all young people to gradually learn the practical skills they will need in adult life. No young person in the home at the time of the inspection was of an age to need a pathway plan. However, staff have a good understanding of the importance of ensuring that these plans are put in place at the appropriate time so that young people understand the arrangements and the support that will be available to them when they leave care.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from the individualised care and support that they receive from staff. They report that they get on well with staff and know that staff are concerned about their welfare. This helps them to feel valued and supports them to settle in the home. This in turn helps them to make progress and achieve positive outcomes.

Staff work very closely with families and professionals from other agencies to ensure that young people are safe, make progress and have access to additional services or resources they need. Professionals make very positive comments about the quality of care in the home and the support young people are given. One said, 'Staff work very hard to meet (name) needs' and another said 'Staff have been fantastic in the level of care provided to (name) and as a result (name) is doing really well.' Professionals have given positive feedback to the home about the way staff have supported young people who have moved on. For example, one social worker said 'Staff have worked hard in the transition and planning for (name) which has had a really positive outcome for this young person.'

Care staff demonstrate a very good knowledge of young people's overall care plans. They develop very detailed placement plans in close consultation with young people.

This ensures that young people understand their plans and that their views are incorporated into them. Plans enable staff to work consistently which supports young people's progress. All plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that they reflect young people's progress and their emerging needs. Young people feel that staff listen to them and are confident that their views matter.

Staff are keen to ensure that young people achieve in education so that they improve their chances in later life. They work closely with teachers and education support staff to ensure that each young person has an education provision that is appropriate to their needs. If young people are excluded from school, care staff liaise closely with teaching staff to ensure that appropriate materials are provided for them in the home. This helps to support young people's education until such time as they are able to return to school. Staff recognise and praise all young people's achievements. This helps to promote young people's sense of self-worth and encourages them to engage with education. As a result, young people's attendance at school and their levels of attainment improve over time in the home.

Young people are encouraged to take part in group activities such as youth clubs and scouts. These enable young people to develop social contacts and friendships in their community and help to broaden their experiences.

At the time of their admission to the home, some young people have struggled to manage their behaviour. Care staff support them to behave appropriately by giving them clear boundaries and providing them with incentives. They also talk to young people individually and as a group to help them to learn how to behave well towards one another. The way staff work with young people helps them to learn how to respond to conflict and difficulties in their lives in ways that are socially acceptable. As a result, young people's behaviour improves over time.

Young people benefit from living in a safe, comfortable and homely environment. The home is suitably located in a residential area with good transport links. This enables young people to have access to local shops and leisure facilities. Young people are supported to personalise their own rooms and to help to keep them clean and tidy. This encourages them to take a pride in their environment. The home is generally well maintained throughout. Although the bathroom window has frosted glass there is no blind; this does not give young people sufficient privacy.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home's safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. Staff training in safeguarding and safe care is kept up to date to ensure that staff know how to recognise and respond to child protection concerns and keep young people safe. Detailed individual risk assessments are put in place for young people. They are regularly reviewed to ensure that they remain relevant and continue to protect them. Young people say that they feel very safe in the home. They also say that staff talk to them about their personal safety outside the home, 'all the time'. They know how

to complain and they identified staff that they would talk to if they had a concern. Young people say that there is no bullying and that staff 'sort out' any problems that arise in the group. This contributes to their feeling of safety and well-being in the home.

The home has robust procedures for managing incidents of unauthorised absence. Most young people do not go missing from the home. Where this is an issue for a young person, staff work effectively with police and other professionals in order to ensure that multi-agency strategy meetings take place and clear protection plans are developed for young people. Professionals confirm that staff work 'very well with partner agencies,' in order to keep young people safe.

Staff are trained to manage challenging behaviour effectively in order to keep young people safe without the need for physical intervention. Staff only use physical restraint as a last resort, when it is needed to keep young people and staff safe. Clear records of any incident are maintained. These include the comments of young people. Records are regularly reviewed by the manager to monitor staff practice and ensure that the welfare of young people is promoted.

Staff undertake regular checks on the environment and the equipment is regularly checked. These arrangements ensure that the home is kept safe for young people, staff and visitors. Young people and staff take part in evacuation drills. These practices enable young people to understand how to leave the home safely in an emergency.

Robust staff recruitment practices ensure that all staff are vetted and assessed as suitable before they start work in the home. This protects young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people benefit from being cared for in a home that is managed effectively. The manager is registered with Ofsted and is experienced and suitably qualified. He has recently completed the Level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care. A very experienced senior care worker deputises when the manager is not in the home, ensuring that the home continues to run smoothly in his absence.

Care staff are competent and have a very good understanding of the individual needs of the young people they look after. The majority of staff are qualified and newer staff are working to gain a relevant qualification. The organisation ensures that they have the on-going training they need to develop and maintain their knowledge and skills. Staff say that training opportunities in the organisation are, 'really good'. Staff are enthusiastic about their work with young people and morale within the team is high. Staff say that they feel they are, 'a really strong committed team' who work well together. They report that they are well supported by their manager through regular formal supervision and informal discussions. These arrangements enable them to discuss their work with young people and also their

own training and development needs. Detailed handovers at the start of each shift, together with regular team meetings, support good communication within the team. This promotes consistency and continuity of care for young people, which in turn supports their progress. Young people were observed to respond very well to staff. One young person said 'Staff keep me safe. Staff are friendly.'

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide to the service provide good information about the home for young people, their relatives and placing social workers. The Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed to ensure that it is up to date. The young person's guide is a colourful document, presented in a style that is appropriate to the needs of young people. It allows young people to see how the home works and also gives them information about their rights in care. Young people confirmed that they had been given a copy of this document and that staff had gone through it with them to make sure that they understood it.

There are robust monitoring arrangements which ensure that the quality of care in the home is regularly reviewed. These include unannounced visits by a senior manager in the organisation, as well as routine checks which are done by the home's manager. Reports of the checks done by both managers are completed and copies sent to Ofsted as required. The manager regularly consults with young people, their relatives and professionals about the quality of care in the home. However, the reports received by Ofsted do not record the outcome of this consultation process to demonstrate how feedback is being used to drive improvements. The manager demonstrates a clear commitment to improving the service for the benefit of young people by taking prompt action to address any issue that is identified through the inspection and monitoring processes.

Two requirements and one recommendation were made at the last inspection. These related to sanctions, one aspect of the recording of restraints and supervision records. These are all met. Sanctions that are given to young people are in line with the requirements of the Children's Homes Regulations. There are few sanctions overall and young people report that they think that these are fair. There are clear records of all instances of restraint. These contain all the information that is required by the regulations. The manager has ensured that records of all supervision sessions, including his own, are kept in the office. These confirm that there is regular formal supervision of the manager and staff.

Young people's records are well maintained and are kept up to date. Young people are encouraged to read and contribute to all their records so that they can see what is written about them and so that their views can be incorporated into their files. These records contribute to young people's knowledge of their time in this placement and support their understanding of their history. All information that is kept about young people is stored securely to protect their right to confidentiality.

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.