

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC414516
Inspection date	27/10/2011
Inspector	Pete Hylton
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/11/2010
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 home that provides accommodation for up to three young people, aged from 10 to 17 years old, at any one time. It is part of the Blue Mountain Group of homes.

Overall effectiveness

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

This is a good children's home with some outstanding features. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvements. All requirements and recommendations have been met and in some cases, exceeded. For example fire alarm testing is now more rigorous and young people have clear and detailed education folders.

While young people benefit from an active staff team there are shifts where no female staff are on duty. This is being addressed by the manager. Furthermore, the sleeping accommodation for staff means that 2 members of staff share a communal area to sleep. While young people do not state this as a problem, the home is taking steps to remedy these issues.

Young people are safe at the home and the staff team work hard to promote their physical and emotional well being. Young people benefit from a protective staff team and a passionate manager. The home has clear development plans in place although formal review is yet to occur.

Young people are fully involved in making decisions regarding their own care. Furthermore, the use of regular key worker sessions ensure that all young people feel listened to. Recording of young people's progress is largely high standard although some details are missed in the achievement folders. Young people report that they like living at the home. A particular strength is the relationships between staff and young people. A social worker commented that, 'staff are very approachable, treat young people with respect.'

Areas for improvementStatutory 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
------	-------------	----------

31 (2001)	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31 (2) (e))	30/12/2011
31 (2001)	provide for persons working at the children's home sleeping accommodation where the provision of such accommodation is needed in connection with the work at the home. (Regulation 31 (10) (b))	30/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that where specific measures, including electronic devices, are used to monitor children, there is a written policy that sets out how they should be used, how they promote the welfare of children, how children will be informed of their use, how legitimate privacy of children will be protected and how children will be protected from potential abuse of such measures (NMS 10:5)
- ensure that the children's home has a clear statement of purpose which is available to and understood by staff and children and reflected in any policies, procedures and guidance. It is available to the responsible authority and any parent or person with parental responsibility (NMS 13:1)
- ensure that the children's guide includes a summary of what the home sets out to do for children, how they can find out their rights, how a child can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer, the Children's Rights Director, Ofsted if they wish to raise a concern with inspectors, and how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 13:5)
- ensure that there is a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the service, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resource (NMS 15:2)
- ensure that the staff group who are in day-to-day contact with children includes staff of both genders whenever possible (NMS 17:10)
- ensure that all existing care staff have attained a minimum level 3 Children and Young People's Workforce Diploma qualification or equivalent (NMS 18:5)
- ensure that staff support and encourage the child to reflect on and understand their history, according to their age and understanding, and to keep appropriate memorabilia of their time in placement. Staff record and help children make a record of (subject to age and understanding), significant life events (NMS 22:6)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress at the home. The home has an active ethos and outdoor pursuits are actively encouraged. Young people have made good progress with their activities. For example, young people are developing skills in swimming, kayaking and football. Prior to admission, the young people did not enjoy full access to these activities. This has led to good improvements in self esteem and confidence for young people. A social worker commented that young people, 'make definite progress.' Furthermore, young people are actively engaged within the local community. For example, taking part in local sporting and outdoor pursuit clubs. This has led to improved outcomes for young people.

Young people are encouraged to make progress. The manager has recently introduced achievement folders for young people which record significant events although there is little detail relating to the photographs in the folders to explain what is being celebrated. This means that the records, in this instance, are not clear.

All young people are engaged in educational provision with varying degrees of attainment. Young people are fully supported in accessing education. Young people are making very good progress in developing a positive self view. Young people at the home present with a variety of complex past behaviours and current needs. This means that progress varies between young people. Where young people are not making good progress in education, staff are working closely with education providers to improve this.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from detailed and thorough care plans. These plans clearly state how care will be provided and young people are fully involved in the review of these. Detailed health care plans ensure all medical needs are addressed and met. Medication is stored securely and rigorously monitored. Where young people self medicate, risk assessments are in place. All young people have lockable storage in their rooms which enables them to keep medication and other personal belongings safe.

Education is well promoted in the home. The staff work closely with young people to support attendance and achievement. Staff ensure that barriers to success are positively addressed. For example, young people are supported in choosing appropriate educational provision. This empowers the young people and they make good progress as a result. A young person commented that, 'staff helped me get into college.' Staff work closely with the education provider to ensure progress is shared and concerns are acted upon. Young people clearly benefit from a staff team who fully support them.

Consultation with young people is exceptionally good. Key work sessions regularly take place and young people feel listened to and respected. Furthermore, young people are actively encouraged to record their own meetings with staff. The manager

also regularly records key work sessions with young people. Young people's views are central to how the home operates. A young person commented about the staff, 'they treat us like teenagers. Don't get treated like we're in a kids home.'

There is excellent practice with regards to the weekly young people's meetings. Young people are fully consulted about activities, meal choices and suggestions for improving the home. Equality and diversity is thoroughly underpinned in these meetings. Young people are encouraged to discuss topical affairs and this is accurately recorded to show how the home is supporting young people in understanding key issues. Recent discussion topics have focused on sexual health, world affairs and events in the local community.

Young people are encouraged, where appropriate, to maintain and improve relationships with family and friends. The home supports young people in accessing visits to their families. The home is rurally located so local community activities are limited. However, the home makes good use of their resources to ensure that young people are engaged in a wide variety of activities.

Young people enjoy a wide variety of healthy and well planned meals. Menus are planned in advance and take into account the wishes of the young people. Young people are able to suggest items for the shopping list and go shopping with staff to purchase the food. This enables young people to develop their independence and this is promoted well in the home.

The home is warm, comfortable and appropriately sized for the young people. The kitchen is well equipped and is the focal point for the house. Young people benefit from well furnished communal areas and the home is largely well maintained. The carpets in the home are heavily stained and there are walls which are in need of decorative repair. These issues do not adversely affect the outcomes for young people. However, they do detract from the otherwise homely atmosphere. Similarly, the garden is mostly well maintained although some parts are infested with weeds.

Young people enjoy an outstanding quality of care. There is a sense of mutual respect between staff and young people. A young person commented that staff, 'treat you right.' Another young person said that, 'staff respect me. They have helped me loads.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There is a robust approach to keeping young people safe. This ensures that young people are safe and that they feel safe. Young people are fully aware of their risk assessments and understand the reasons for them. One young person said that, 'if I wasn't here, I would be doing what I was doing before.' Where protective measures are used, these are agreed with the young person, parents and social worker.

Staff have clear and rigorous responses to a young person going missing. Clear protocols with the Police and placing authorities ensure safety is clearly addressed. Furthermore, the use of 'grab bags' enable young people to be better equipped for the rural location if they choose to leave the home. The staffing ratio is 1:1 and this ensures that close supervision of young people maintains their safety and wellbeing at all times. Careful and thorough recording of all incidents ensures that relevant bodies are always notified and that patterns in behaviour can be monitored. Young people are given the opportunity to discuss their behaviour through regular and planned key working sessions.

Behaviour management is very good in the home. Restraint is used very rarely and the staff team have a proactive approach to managing behaviour. Young people feel listened to and respected. This is clearly reflected in the reduction of challenging behaviour in the home. Individualised incentive programs for each young person further promote acceptable behaviour. Young people are given opportunities to record their views when sanctions are given. This ensures that their views are heard and acted upon.

The home is not restrictive in any way and although bedroom and the exterior doors are alarmed, young people can move freely. While the young people and those significant to them are aware of the alarms, there is no written policy in the home which sets out their use. This does not lead to a negative impact on young people. All young people report that they feel safe and that staff take their safety as a primary concern. A young person commented that, 'they keep me safe. Learn me about safe behaviour.'

Leadership and management

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

There have been many improvements since the last inspection. Recommendations from the previous inspection have all been met and in some cases, exceeded. For example, a night time fire drill was held in the early hours of the morning. There is a strong and robust approach to improving the service at the home.

The manager is passionate about developing the service. The home's development plan shows identified areas for improvement. The plan is new and is yet to be formally reviewed so it is not clear how any planned development points are being monitored. However, there is evidence to suggest that plans will improve the environment and the outcomes for young people. Most notably is the planned extension to the property which will provide a bigger staff office and more suitable staff sleeping accommodation. Although the young people do not consider it a problem, two staff currently sleep in the lounge area. The inspector was shown detailed plans for building an extension which will resolve this issue.

Staff are well trained and well supervised in their duties. Not all care staff are trained to level 3 although this is being addressed with all staff undertaking the training. Daily checks of all records by the manager ensure that monitoring is thorough. The

home's Statement of Purpose is very thorough and comprehensive. However, three members of staff currently sleep in the home to further promote the safety of young people. The Statement of Purpose states that two members of staff sleep in at the home.

Young people benefit from a well written young person's guide to the home. A list of useful numbers is both enclosed in the pack given to young people and also held on their file. This details all important telephone numbers and is individualised to the young person. The telephone number for the Children's Rights Director is missing and some telephone numbers are out of date. However, this has little impact on young people as a wide range of support services are promoted.

The home is well resourced and benefits from a staff team who are extremely active. The manager ensures that resources are available and young people are able to enjoy a broad range of activities. Staff development is positively addressed to meet their needs. For example, a member of staff is receiving additional training in outdoor pursuits to enable young people to access more activities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.