

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC423617
Inspection date	04/04/2013
Inspector	Linda Brown
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	11/10/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

The home provides three placements for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It aims to provide a nurturing environment in which to develop and prepare young people for a return to family, foster care or independent living.

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 manager is committed to developing the service and providing a child-focused high quality of care to young people. Young people's individual needs are well met and this enables them to achieve positive outcomes and reach their full potential.

The atmosphere in the home is very calm and warm. Young people appear relaxed and happy and their needs and views are central to the running of the home. Young people are supported and encouraged to contribute to the decisions being made about their lives. Staff actively involve young people in both their care planning and the day-to-day running of the home. As a result, all aspects of care planning are personalised to meet the individual needs of the young people.

Young people benefit from the positive relationships they develop with staff. These relationships are a key factor to the success of the home as young people form good, trusting relationships. Staff are totally child focused and spend a large proportion of their time talking to and completing activities with young people.

Clear boundaries are in place and young people are aware of the expectations and rules of the home. Young people are kept safe from harm by good risk assessments; recruitment practice and staff awareness and understanding of the policies and procedures. This is further strengthened by the positive relationships between staff and young people.

Staff work closely with a range of professionals in order to provide young people with a tailor-made package of care. Positive feedback is received from visiting

professionals. Their comments included: 'a really good placement; staff have a really good knowledge of the young person's needs', and 'a lovely relaxed atmosphere in the home. Staff have a good understanding of young people's behaviours and how to address these. The placement very much meets the young person's needs.'

The manager is aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses. Good external and internal monitoring takes place and development plans address any identified weaknesses.

Two requirements and one recommendation for improvement are made at this inspection. The shortfalls identified have not had a direct impact on the care being provided to young people. Requirements are made regarding the supervision and training of staff. One recommendation is made regarding the manager's Regulation 34 monitoring reports.

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
27 (2001)	ensure staff receive appropriate training with particular regard to specialist training, such as autism and drug awareness (Regulation 27(4)(a))	13/05/2013
27 (2001)	ensure staff receive appropriate supervision, with particular regard to newly appointed staff on probation.(Regulation 27 (4)(a))	13/05/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure the managers monitoring, inline with regulations, identifies patterns and trends and demonstrate how the quality of care provided in the children's home is improving, with particular regard to the regulation 34 reports supplied to Ofsted.(NMS 21.2)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people benefit from a staff team who provide them with individual support in order to develop confidence and a positive view of themselves. Several of the young people arrive at the home in crisis, struggling to cope with home life, school or a break down at another residential placement. As a result, some young people display behaviours that can be damaging to themselves and others. While living in this home young people make good progress in developing emotional resilience, confidence and self-esteem. This is evidenced by a significant reduction in self-harming and risk taking behaviours. Key workers have a good knowledge of the background and individual needs of the young people and actively promote their confidence and understanding.

Professional relationships are formed between staff and young people and as a result, young people appear relaxed, confident and happy. Support continues for young people and their families once they have moved on through visits and phone calls to the home. This enables young people to make good progress in developing a positive self-view, and making and sustaining relationships.

Health needs are identified within the placement plans. A range of support services are available to address the individual needs of the young people. Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and encourage healthy eating and regular exercise. This practice ensures that the health needs of children and young people are identified supported and addressed.

The manager is committed to supporting young people back into education and from the time of a young person's admission liaises with the appropriate professionals to ensure an appropriate placement is identified. As a result, young people are attending their placements and making good progress.

Young people are supported and encouraged to develop their independence skills at a level that is appropriate, taking into consideration their individual needs. Staff engage young people in a range of tasks from menu planning, shopping, budgeting and cooking, to keeping their rooms tidy and general chores around the house. This gradual introduction into independence prepares them well for future semi-independent living and adulthood.

Quality of care

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

Young people are supported and encouraged to develop positive and constructive relationships and behave appropriately. Staff have a good knowledge and understanding of the young people they care for. This knowledge enables them to understand the moods and behaviours and adapt the care they provide to meet individual needs. Strategies are in place to promote positive behaviour, Staff communicate well to ensure that they are consistent in their implementation; resulting in a significant improvement in the behaviour being displayed by the young people. Comments made by parents praise the staff for the support and progress their children have made due to the implementation of boundaries and routines.

Staff regularly seek the views of young people. The ethos at the home is to involve the young people in the decision making for all aspects of their lives. For example, decisions regarding day-to-day living, such as decor, activities and menus, as well as involving young people in taking an active role in their care planning and decision making. Young people confirm they are consulted in both regular key worker sessions and weekly young people's meetings. In addition, a young people's advocate is available and this is further supported by an independent visitor. This practice ensures that young people are able to openly discuss their feelings, wishes, concerns, anxieties and worries. Young people believe that staff will listen and take action to address any concerns they may have. Equally staff spend time with young people explaining why their requests cannot always be met.

Detailed plans are in place to provide staff with an understanding of the needs of individual young people and the services provided for ensuring that those needs are met. These plans include any additional services and support that arise out of a young person's disability, ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith or belief. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of the plans which are updated and reviewed regularly. Families and social workers are also consulted regarding the preparation of the plans, resulting in close working relationships being formed with positive outcomes for young people. One parent commented that, 'staff treat children with the utmost care, it's not just a job, they have been a life line for us.'

Young people demonstrate a good understanding of the importance of living a healthy lifestyle. Staff spend time with young people talking about the benefits of healthy living and the long-term effects of risk taking and harmful behaviour, for example, drug taking and smoking. This is balanced with benefits of healthy eating and regular exercise. Young people are actively involved in shopping, preparing and cooking food. Plans to grow their own herbs and vegetables are also in place. For example, young people who were previously smoking are no longer engaging in this habit.

The educational needs of the young people are fully supported. Management and staff work closely with young people and education providers to ensure young people are provided with the appropriate provisions to enable them to reach their full potential. Young people speak positively regarding the support they have been given to find the appropriate education placement. As a result, young people who had very poor attendance prior to living at the home are now engaging and making steady progress.

Young people's achievements are celebrated. At the request of young people, staff have created a wall of achievement. Certificates and awards from educational placements, activities and in-house achievements are displayed. Young people speak with pride regarding the awards they have received.

Young people enjoy varied and purposeful activities in the home and the wider community. They make good progress in developing their social skills. In addition to group and in-house activities young people are encouraged to pursue their individual

hobbies and interests; for example, football, dog walking and training.

The home is clean and well maintained providing a safe and homely environment for the young people. Young people take an active role in the choices of colour schemes and furnishing of both their bedrooms and communal areas. Young people's art work is displayed around the home and bedrooms are personalised.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people feel safe at the home and feedback received from families also confirms this view. Despite some young people only being at the home for a short period of time, they do confirm that they feel safe and are confident that staff will listen and act upon any concerns they may have.

Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the safeguarding procedures which are implemented into their day-to-day practice. Staff are all aware of the whistle-blowing procedure and are clear that they would have no hesitation in following the procedure in order to protect young people. There have been no incidents of bullying within the home; staff have been active in following up any concerns that have arisen at school. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the signs of bullying and where required have carried out detailed key worker sessions to address these issues.

The atmosphere at the home is relaxed and calm and the emphasis among the staff team is to defuse any potentially difficult and challenging situations. Despite the home having a relatively new staff and management team, staff speak positively regarding the commitment of the team to provide young people with a consistent and caring approach. This is further enhanced by detailed behaviour management plans and risk assessments. Staff meetings are held regularly to discuss strategies and review practice. The management team operate an open door policy and work closely with the staff team to provide good role models and guidance to establish and develop good practice. At times young people find it difficult to express their feelings in an appropriate way but are able to write about how they feel. In discussion with young people a wishes and feelings post box has been provided. Staff immediately respond to the letters to resolve and defuse any issues the young people may have. This has proved to be extremely successful; young people are learning to manage their feelings and behaviours. As a result, there have been no incidents of physical interventions. Positive behaviour is rewarded and sanctions are recorded and closely monitored by the manager, to ensure their effectiveness.

Young people are protected and are cared for by staff that understand their vulnerability and are aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a young person going missing. There are effective protocols in place with the local police and safeguarding services which are followed in the event of a young person going missing from the home. In addition, staff carry out their own checks and searches for

young people. Young people's risk assessments are detailed, comprehensive and regularly reviewed. This ensures that the individual vulnerabilities of young people are identified. Due to recent changes to the police protocol the manager is already communicating with the local police to clarify the changes and ensure prompt action will be taken to protect vulnerable young people in her care. Young people confirm that they are happy at the home and since the previous inspection there has been a reduction in the frequency of young people going missing. Although, there have been incidents, for example, young people leaving school without permission or failing to return on time. Progress is being made as young people are now making contact with staff and returning themselves to the home.

Young people's protection is further supported by good health and safety routines and robust recruitment practice. Staff understand it is their responsibility to keep the building safe and effectively implement measures to do so. As a consequence young people are protected from accidents and injuries. Regular fire tests and drills take place and equipment is checked and serviced within the required timescales. Young people are aware of the fire procedures and demonstrate an awareness of the risk through their involvement in assisting staff to complete the safety checks. Recruitment takes place in line with the provider's recruitment and selection procedures. Young people are also involved in this process. For example, questions devised by the young people are currently being used in the recruitment of staff. Visitors sign in and are checked on arrival and where appropriate identification is required.

Leadership and management

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

The manager is experienced, qualified and registered with Ofsted. Since her appointment there have been a number of new staff recruited to include a deputy manager and shift leaders. This has provided a senior management structure to support the manager in her role. The manager is committed to improving the lives and outcomes for the young people who live at the home. She is able to demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the service and the action she has taken to address the shortfalls. Weaknesses resulting in requirements and recommendations made at this inspection are identified within the manager's plan for the improvement of the service. This demonstrates the manager understands of the developmental needs of the service.

Regular internal and external monitoring of the service takes place. Regulation 33 monitoring visits are undertaken monthly by an external visitor to monitor the overall care and welfare of the young people. Requirements made at the previous inspection regarding the quality of the monitoring reports have been addressed and the visitor now consults with young people and stakeholders. The manager responds immediately to any actions raised as a result of these visits. Regulation 34 monitoring reports are completed and submitted to Ofsted every six months as required by Regulation. However, these reports lack an analysis of the service to demonstrate how the manager is improving the quality of care in the home. Despite the lack of

analysis within the Regulation 34 reports, there are good systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. Development plans also highlight timescales and areas for improvement.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the aims and objectives for the home and provides young people, families, carers and professionals with detailed information about the home. A young people's guide is also available.

A requirement made at the previous inspection regarding the emergency admission process has been addressed. Information regarding emergency admissions is now available in the Statement of Purpose and a new emergency placement procedure has been implemented.

The Registered Manager takes an active role in the day-to-day management of the home. Staff feel well supported by a manager who is easily accessible. Good out-of-hours systems are also available. Staff speak positively regarding the support they receive from each other. Team meetings are held regularly and this enables them to develop their practice to provide a consistent and effective service to young people. However, individual staff supervisions are not taking place in line with the required timescales. The manager has taken action to address this shortfall and there have been some recent improvements. However, not all of the staff working at the home are receiving the appropriate level of supervision and this compromises the good work that is taking place.

The home employs a core team of permanent staff who are supported when required by the home's bank staff. There is a balance in terms of experience, age, gender and ethnicity. However, due to unforeseen circumstances and staff sickness a number of the permanent team are currently off work. There are always adequate numbers of staff on duty and in order to provide consistency for the young people, staff are covering additional shifts and the same bank staff are used. Young people confirm that they know the staff and there are not lots of different people working at the home. Recruitment is currently taking place to resolve some of these issues. However, this situation has resulted in some specialist staff training being delayed.

Staff have either completed or are in the process of completing Level 3 or Level 5 Diploma for Children and Young People's Workforce, dependent on their position. All staff complete mandatory training. Some staff have researched on line information regarding mental conditions. However, only a limited number of staff are receiving specialist training in autism awareness and drug and alcohol misuse. This may compromise the care provided to young people. The manager has identified staff training as an area that requires improvement. Some in-house training is planned and the responsible individual has recently completed his training to enable him to deliver autism training to staff.

The manager demonstrates an understanding of the importance to pass information about serious events to the relevant professionals through the Regulation 30 notification process. Young people's records are up-to-date, well maintained and stored in a suitably secure place.

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.