

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC424280
Inspection date	23/05/2013
Inspector	Russell Shackford
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/01/2013
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 is a local authority managed children's home which provides care and accommodation for 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 **good**.

Overall effectiveness is judged as good. There are minor shortfalls in fire safety precautions, behaviour management records and quality assurance monitoring. These shortfalls have a potential rather than a direct negative impact on the welfare and safety of young people.

Young people's health outcomes are potentially compromised because, despite good health promotion practices by staff, they continue to engage in risk-taking behaviours such as frequent smoking and sporadic drug and alcohol use.

Taking into account their starting point at the time of placement, young people make good progress towards their desired educational attendance and achievement targets. Young people who no longer attend school are successfully supported to seek further education and employment.

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. The staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run.

Staff are well aware of young people's assessed needs and the quality of written placement plans is good because they clearly outline how young people's needs are to be met.

Young people say that they are confident to complain and understand how to do so. Any complaints received are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

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
32 (2001)	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that all persons working at the home are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire (Regulation 32 (1) (e))	13/06/2013

Recommendations

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

- review incidents of challenging behaviour, examine trends or issues emerging from this, to enable staff to reflect and learn to inform future practice, in particular the effectiveness of sanctions imposed (NMS 3.21)
- ensure that there are effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities and administration of the home and that the system provides for consultation with children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities (NMS 21.1)
- establish a system to report upon the previous six months monitoring of the matters listed in schedule 6 in order to enable the provider to identify any trends and issues of concern so that they can continually improve the quality of care at the home. A copy of every report should be sent to HMCI within twenty eight days. (NMS 21.2 and Volume 5, statutory guidance, para 3.14)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **adequate**.

Young people benefit from the discussions and stimulating interactive activities that staff use to build relationships with them. As a result, young people gain good knowledge and understanding of their own backgrounds and future care plans.

Staff effectively identify young people's health needs and ensure the provision of services that meet these. Young people keep appointments with the doctor, dentist and optician and they take some degree of responsibility for managing their own

health. They have contact with specialist health workers such as the looked after children's nurse, drug awareness team and adolescent mental health service which promotes their good physical health and emotional well-being. Some young people are making good progress and taking increasing degrees of responsibility for managing their health. However, other young people's health outcomes are compromised because, despite good health promotion practices by staff, they continue to engage in risk-taking behaviours as well as frequent smoking, sporadic drinking of alcohol and drug use.

Young people's educational attendance is good and improving from their starting points. Taking into account both their attainment and progress from the starting point of their placement, young people make good progress towards achieving their desired educational achievement targets. Young people who no longer attend school are successfully supported to seek further education and employment. For example, one young person has secured employment within the provider's administration team.

Very good staff support and effective contact with families helps to preserve and build relationships. Young people benefit from clear contact arrangements and understand when they will see significant people. This knowledge helps them settle and enjoy seeing their friends and family. Young people say, 'Staff have helped me to keep in touch with people that are important to me. This has improved my relationships with them.'

The organisation has its own incremental life-skills programme for young people. This good quality package is implemented according to the needs of the individual. Young people are given effective help and support which prepares them well for adulthood because they say, 'I feel ready to move on and look after myself.'

Quality of care

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

Young people living in this home benefit greatly from an experienced staff group who demonstrate enthusiastically their commitment to addressing young people's care and safety needs. Staff say, 'The best thing about my work is being with and around the young people seeing the progress that they make.' Young people confirm this, saying, 'I get on well with all the staff and they help you if you need things' and, 'There is always someone to talk to if you want.' Young people enjoy warm relationships with staff in the home. Staff speak in a proud manner about their young people and their achievements. One staff said, 'We work hard together and we have good relationships with lovely young people.'

Consistently well written behaviour management plans reflect the individual needs of young people well and outline strategies for staff to follow. Staff consistently implement these to good effect. As a result, there is little use of sanctions. However, the sanction records do not always record clearly the effectiveness of sanctions imposed, preventing effective monitoring and evaluation.

Staff are pro-active and challenging when seeking out appropriate education provision for young people. The manager has recently revised the written guidance for staff around education to help ensure that all young people have optimum access to education. Staff actively encourage young people with their school attendance, promoting good routines and preparation. Contact between the home and school is frequent and effective; enabling staff to support young people successfully with homework or personal targets. Library membership is encouraged, while supported reading and revision sessions ensure that young people are well prepared for exams. One staff said, 'We are aspirational in our attitude towards the young people's education and employment. They have begun to see its importance and value.'

Young people confirm that their views are genuinely sought and acted upon. This includes making decisions about their lives and influencing the way that the home is run. Staff provide opportunities for daily group and one-to-one discussion. This is supported by visits from independent advocacy services. Examples of young people's choices acted upon include: décor, a gaming zone, activities, food and personalising bedrooms.

Young people say they know how to complain and are confident to do so. This is because staff have explained the complaints process to them and there is good, clear information in the children's guide. Staff also provide information and contact details of independent advocacy services. There are very few complaints and these are clearly recorded to reflect the action taken by the staff and the outcomes.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people prior to admission and as result young people placed tend to be more compatible. Admissions to the home are planned and young people are involved in that planning. Young people can visit the home before they move in which helps them move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner. A social worker said, 'The staff were quick to ensure that health and education needs were addressed. They provide regular summaries of young people's progress which I find helpful.' Assessed needs are identified within the home's placement plans which clearly outline the arrangements for meeting the identified needs of young people. This supports staff to consistently deliver individualised care and support to young people.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Statutory case reviews take place within the required timescales and inform relevant people of the progress made by young people. Following these reviews, the placement plan is updated to ensure any new recommendations are implemented.

Young people pursue their particular interests and are enthusiastically supported and encouraged by staff. Young people confirm that they engage in a variety of leisure activities, such as: horse-riding; boxing club; running; football; swimming and shopping. Young people also have access to a library-based computer, and a good range of books, DVDs and games for education and entertainment purposes.

The young people live in a home that is appropriately located near to shops, leisure, education and employment opportunities. It is on a main bus route to the nearby city centre. The home's location and transport links support young people's ability to develop independence skills that will equip them for adulthood. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. The garden is well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Good policies and practice around the storage, handling, administration and disposal of medication safeguards young people's welfare.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

This home is good at keeping young people safe. Young people confirm that staff teach them about risks and how to keep themselves safe. Consistently well-written risk assessments inform staff of the action to take to minimise any identified risks and this is implemented in practice. Staff successfully engage the young people in talking through identified concerns which helps them develop an understanding of the risks involved and the reasons for adults being concerned. As a result, they feel cared for and protected and some young people's risk-taking behaviours reduce significantly. Young people confirm this with examples such as, 'the staff talk to me about keeping safe, who I hang around with and sticking to my agreed coming in times.' An information file has details of local safeguarding agencies that young people can access for independent advice and information.

The provider has good safeguarding systems and procedures which staff follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training which includes elements of child exploitation and internet safety. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures and because of this are able to promote and protect young people's safety.

Strategies implemented by staff are successful in preventing bullying as young people say there is no bullying at the home. The subject is regularly discussed with young people. This helps to raise their awareness of the issues involved.

There is good written guidance for staff to follow in the event of unauthorised absence and young people going missing. This is supported by individualised risk assessment records. As young people settle into the home, incidences of them going missing reduce and effective action is taken to secure their safe return.

Regular fire safety checks and maintenance arrangements contribute to a safe environment. All staff have received fire safety training to help staff minimise any risks posed to young people in the event of a fire at the home. However, not all staff have been involved in a recent fire drill. This has the potential to compromise safety in the event of a fire.

All staff are appropriately recruited. Their suitability to work with young people is assessed by the recruitment checks completed, including the completion of a check with the Criminal Records Bureau.

Leadership and management

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

A Statement of Purpose is available which informs professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. The children's guide provides a user-friendly summary of the Statement of Purpose and this is appropriate to the age and understanding of the young people accommodated. Young people receive a copy of it before they move to live at the home and this informs them of what to expect if they choose to live there.

An established staff team provide consistent care to young people. Staff receive satisfactory induction training before commencing work with the young people. This familiarises them with the home's written guidance which is implemented in practice. Some staff have completed an appropriate course at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People as well as completing training in other childcare related topics. Newer staff are working towards the level 3 Children & Young People's Workforce Diploma. As a result, young people are looked after by staff that are well trained, competent and supported to meet their needs.

The manager monitors and reports on the administration systems of the home. However, the recordings are sometimes brief in detail and do not fully evaluate practice. It is not always clear that the children accommodated in the home, their parents and placing authorities have been consulted as part of the process. It is therefore not always evident how their views influence service development. These shortfalls have not had a detrimental effect upon the quality of care or outcomes for young people but do impact on the home's ability to demonstrate how it intends to improve practice. A summary report on the quality of care during the previous six months has not been completed or supplied to Ofsted as required. The regulator is therefore unable to monitor the conduct of the home in the interim period between inspections.

Young people's individual case files; the home's records and other written documentation are of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals and ensures young people have a permanent and secure record of their history, development and progress. Case files are stored in a manner which promotes the privacy and confidentiality of young people. Information is arranged in a manner that is useable by staff and yet accessible to young people; who are aware of their right to access the information.

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.