

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC424897
Inspection date	16/01/2013
Inspector	Stephen Halliley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	31/05/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is privately owned and provides placements for children on behalf of local authorities. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to five children of either gender who have emotional and 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 **outstanding**.

Young people make very significant progress in all aspects of their lives while living in this home. This is a result of the highly effective, personalised, exceptionally well-planned care each young person receives. All staff build successful, rewarding relationships with young people, their families and other professionals from the outset.

Young people know they are listened to and that their needs are central to the operation of the home. Their views are consistently positive about the quality of care and the way they are looked after in the home. Staff show consistently that young people are central to the ethos of the home and their thinking. The positive relationships between staff and young people, and the well decorated and maintained environment show the young people are respected and viewed as important to the successful running of the home.

Young people are kept safe and feel safe and are happy to spend quality time with staff. Discussions are open and honest and young people feel they can talk to all staff about issues which are affecting them. Young people are supported to develop appropriate life skills and are fully involved in planning and monitoring this. This support, guidance and information leads to young people being able to feel confident in their ability to make effective transitions into adult life.

The Registered Manager is ambitious, driven and focused in ensuring continuous

improvements which benefit the outcomes for young people. The home is actively and effectively monitored and all staff are supported to provide extremely high quality care through training, advice and supervision. Key to this process is the manager's attitude of giving staff responsibility for decision-making and the running of the home. The manager is highly visible and accessible in the home but her approach allows staff and young people to take responsibility and to flourish in a safe environment.

Minor shortfalls were noted in the weekly checking of fire alarm systems and the frequency of supervision for some staff.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff have access to support and advice and are provided with regular supervision by appropriately qualified and experienced staff (NMS 19.4)
- ensure management of the home ensures all staff's work is consistent with these regulations, NMS and the home's policies and procedures. This specifically relates to the frequency of fire alarm tests being carried out. (NMS 21.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people living in this home have made tremendous strides in many aspects of their lives. This is especially so in education but improvements in social skills and awareness, life skills and emotional maturity are also marked.

All young people are in full time education and attendance levels are extremely high. With intensive support from staff, provided through an incredibly strong link with the local school, expectations on young people are high. This represents very significant progress for young people from their starting points. One young person also has a part time job in the evenings and this is going extremely well. This ties in well with his independence plan as he is managing his money, using public transport and coping very well in potentially demanding social situations. He also buys his own food, cooks meals and is taking responsibility for doing his laundry. These skills will provide him with a good basis on which to move on to an adult placement when the time is right.

The extensively resourced and well-stimulated environment also helps young people to flourish. Health needs are comprehensively met and young people's physical health is very good. This is supported by them being encouraged to choose healthy diets and to adopt active lifestyles through the provision of an extensive range of

stimulating activities. Young people discuss issues of hygiene, diet and healthy lifestyle choices with staff and appear to value and act upon this advice and support. Emotional and psychological health needs are assessed and met by open access to a range of specialists including art therapists and child psychologists. This well-rounded approach to health management ensures young people are in good health and are able to take responsibility for their own health needs.

Young people are fully aware of their backgrounds and why they are living in this home. Emotional resiliency is greatly improved as they are supported by staff to understand why things happen in their lives and their role in changing their futures. The full involvement of young people in producing placement plans and reviewing progress ensures they are fully aware of the factors affecting them.

Young people are able to have contact with family and friends in a variety of settings and in a manner tailored to their individual needs and plans. Many young people have come from highly disruptive backgrounds and contact may have been problematic. Staff in the home work hard to ensure young people can maintain contact and relationships with their families and others who are important to them. One social worker said, 'In terms of family contact a lot of work has been done to try and develop his relationship with Mum. An identified member of staff in the home has been working on this and a good working relationship has developed. He now has regular contact with his family.'

Young people make a positive contribution to the home through group meetings, daily discussions and feedback, input to their plans and reviews and through discussion with the Registered Manager as part of her development of the home. They are involved in the wider community through involvement in youth clubs, sports teams, work experience and a range of other activities. This developing knowledge of wider social and community issues shows enormous progress for young people.

Social workers feel the support for young people to achieve positive outcomes is extremely good. Comments made include, 'The home is fantastic and provides the opportunity to make a positive move forward and to receive the levels of support he needs. We need more homes like this.' Another said, 'All staff have very high aspirations of the young people and are intent on them all reaching their potential.'

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from very strong and positive relationships with the adults who look after them. Young people are clearly listened to and their well-being and development is absolutely central to the work of the home.

Young people are actively involved in day-to-day planning within the home including the menus, activities, holidays and decoration and furnishings. This ensures they live in a home that meets their needs in all aspects and that they feel valued as individuals whose wishes and feelings are important. Relationships between young

people and adults are respectful and staff are sensitive to the feelings of young people, especially at times of emotional turmoil. Excellent work was carried out with one young person exploring and explaining the issues which impact on his family contact. This ensures young people understand what is going on around them, are involved in decisions which affect them and are incredibly well supported by staff. One social worker commented, 'The expectations the home has of this young person are high. They go the extra mile to make sure they have clear boundaries and that they provide continual and consistent support on a daily basis.'

All young people are clear that if they have an issue or complaint they wish to raise they would speak to the Registered Manager. They are aware of the other methods open to them, such as complaint forms, talking to social workers or calling Ofsted, but are confident the Registered Manager would deal with any issues quickly and appropriately.

Highly individualised, frequently reviewed and updated placement plans ensure that young people's changing needs are continually addressed. This is informed by the care plan from the local authority and has input from the young people and their parents. This joined up working ensures a consistent approach to young people's care is provided by everyone who is involved with their care.

Young people live in a home where their health care needs are fully met at all times. Their physical health is supported by access to health professionals such as General Practitioner's, dentists and opticians and all have regular check-ups. The range of physical activities offered by the home also supports health promotion. They have large grounds which make outdoor games such as football and cricket a part of daily life. Other activities include bowling, swimming, cycling, and trips to the beach or the home's caravan. A healthy diet and on-going key working sessions around health issues, such as smoking and substance misuse, further ensure young people are well educated about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. Emotional and psychological health is supported and promoted by ready access to a range of specialist services. This includes a child consultant psychologist, art therapists, child and adolescent mental health services and specialist life story workers to help address underlying issues which may be impacting on mental well-being. The availability of this plethora of resources ensures young people's health needs are addressed to a consistently high standard.

Educational support for young people is an undoubted strength of this service. Staff support young people in school on a daily basis with the level of input being linked to their behaviours and abilities. One Social worker was 'impressed with the very good support of young people in achieving educational goals.' An educational liaison said, 'The expectations of traumatised children accessing education are realistic. There is a clear understanding of the emotional needs of all who live here and it is the most supportive environment, keeping education as a high priority.' This commitment to supporting education ensures young people view their education as important and they are supported to reach their potential academically.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people are very clear that they feel safe in this home and that staff work hard to ensure they are kept safe. They talked about high levels of staff supervision, door buzzers being used at night and strong practices to reduce the potential for any bullying to occur. Bullying is not seen as an issue by young people. Risk assessments are in place to reduce risks to young people but this does not detract from young people being able to take managed risks appropriate to their age and understanding.

Young people are further protected from risk of injury or accident by a raft of health and safety checks being carried out at regular intervals. Some very minor gaps were noted in the frequency of fire alarm tests. While this has not had a negative impact there is the potential for this to have led to increased risk to young people should there have been a fire at these times.

Young people do not go missing from this service. The last recorded incident of missing from care was in July 2012. This shows that practices to ensure young people are kept safe are effective. When young people do go missing good work is done to try and facilitate a quick return to the home. Good discussion takes place upon return to try and prevent further episodes of absence. This is clearly having the desired effect as young people are being supported in managing their behaviour in a manner which does not make them feel they need to abscond from the home.

Restraint is only used to prevent young people from injuring themselves or others or to prevent serious damage to the home. All records of restraint are clear, accurate and complete. Sanctions used are relevant to behaviours and are clearly understood by young people and staff. In all instances of restraint or sanctions young people have been spoken to about this after the event. This ensures they fully understand why the disciplinary measure was used, why their behaviour was unacceptable and allows them to explore new ways of managing their behaviour should a similar situation arise in the future.

There are very robust procedures in place for vetting staff before they are able to work with young people. Procedures for recording visitors to the home, checking identification and chaperoning them if young people are on site are similarly thorough. This ensures young people are protected from the possibility of harm or abuse by people working with them or adults who visit their home.

While there have been no allegations or suspicions of harm recently staff are very clear on their responsibilities should an allegation or disclosure be made. All staff are fully up-to-date with safeguarding training to ensure consistent practice and appropriate response should issues be raised. The Registered Manager is also very clear of her responsibilities in this regard especially with regard to notifying other professional bodies such as Ofsted or the local authority designated officer.

Leadership and management

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

This home is well managed by a dedicated, experienced and passionate Registered Manager. Senior staff are taking on additional responsibilities and roles as part of their on-going professional development. This includes compiling rotas, carrying out internal monitoring and taking overall responsibility for health and safety. This increased skill base for more senior staff can only be beneficial for the home as a whole.

The home has fully met all requirements and recommendations made at the last Ofsted inspection. Further progress includes a programme of redecoration, a more secure storage system for archiving records and a change of heating system which means the home will never be in a position where it has no heating. Other progress includes the acquisition of the neighbouring building to use as a bespoke office suite for Directors, for offsite supervision and for the uninterrupted writing of reports. Plans have also been drawn up for the conversion of outbuildings into workshops, a games room and an art and music room.

The home fully meets the aims and objectives as set out in their Statement of Purpose and one social worker is 'very clear that in terms of the level of care they provide they will do anything a parent would do for their child.'

There is regular detailed monitoring of records and systems in use and this is used to inform future development of the home. Strengths and weaknesses of the team are clear to the manager. The major strength is the team attitude and their empathetic and intuitive approach to their work. This is sometimes tempered by their desire to meet all the young people's wants all of the time. The Registered Manager is clear there needs to be a realisation that this is not always possible and that this could lead to young people developing unrealistic expectations. This is a developmental area for a young and enthusiastic team and is not to the detriment of young people in any way.

All staff undertake a comprehensive package of training as part of their induction process. The mandatory training courses are regularly updated and this ensures staff are able to work with young people in a consistent and safe manner. All staff receive supervision and attend team meetings and consultations with the consultant child psychiatrist to help support and develop their practice. However there were gaps noted in the frequency of supervision for some staff. Additional training is available to staff and this has included the member of staff with health and safety responsibility undertaking the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health Managing Safely award which is a nationally accredited qualification.

All records held in the home are detailed, clear, concise and relevant. This will aid young people in getting a clear understanding of their time in the home should they wish to look at their files in the future. Notifications sent to Ofsted since the last inspection have been timely and there are no gaps in this ensuring that Ofsted, as a regulator, maintain a clear overview of what is going on in the home.

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 children's homes.