

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC429995
Inspection date	24/11/2011
Inspector	Bill Drumm
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	22/07/2011
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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

The children's home is run by a private company and provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Overall effectiveness

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

Young people living in the home have made good steady progress. They have benefitted from a committed and enthusiastic staff team who have a good knowledge base and sound values. Education, training and employment are actively promoted and supported. Young people are encouraged to become involved in a range of activities around the home and within the local community. This helps young people to develop their self confidence and social skills. Young people feel listened to and feel they can talk with staff about any problems or concerns they may have. Young people and members of staff have good relationships which are based on mutual respect. Young people are polite and confident. The home is pleasant and welcoming and meets the needs of the young people. Feedback for this inspection from young people, staff members and other professionals is positive.

Not every young person has had their needs assessed prior to admission by their social worker and they do not have a formal placement plan in place. Each young person does have a care plan in place written by the home's manager and staff members. However, the home's care plan is spread across several documents. Young people may not know how one specific document relates to another and how their needs are being met. The needs of young people are however regularly reviewed. Members of staff take time to discuss reviews with each young person. This helps to ensure their thoughts and feelings are fully discussed and borne in mind. The home has a young people's guide in place. The young people's guide does not fully explain what it is like to live at the home and who young people can contact if they are dissatisfied about anything. Therefore young people are not given all the information they need to raise a concern or complaint effectively to ensure it is fully addressed.

Young people are encouraged to participate in activities of daily living and to develop their self-help skills. However, the basic skills of young people have not been assessed and a programme of development has not been written for each individual young person. Essential daily living skills may not be taught and the young person may not achieve their maximum independence.

Members of staff have all received training to help them do their jobs better and all training is up to date. Members of staff have the skills necessary to look after young

people. The home has clear policies and procedures in place to guide staff members and to promote good practice.

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 has a comprehensive children's guide in place and that the guide is explained to young people in a way that is accessible to them (NMS 13.4)
- ensure that each young person is supported to develop skills associated with daily living (NMS 12.1)
- review the home's recording systems for sanctions and restraints to ensure they are retained within a bound volume used specifically for that purpose (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes p2.91)
- ensure that each young person's placement is underpinned by an up to date assessment of the young person's needs and family circumstances (Children's Act 1989 Guidance and Regulations Volume 5: Children's Homes p3.2)
- ensure that each young person has an accurate and up-to-date placement plan. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people living at the home are encouraged to learn new things and to experience new activities. Recent activities undertaken with young people include visiting the cinema, feeding the chickens, cooking, writing a CV and visiting the local job centre. One young person said, 'It's ok here'. A social worker responsible for placing a young person at the home said, 'my young person has the option to become involved in different activities. I've seen the staff at work any they adopt a gentle, positive approach which seems to be working and it's good to see'. This helps young people to learn new things, to grow more confident and to develop their self esteem. Each young person has their own key worker. The key worker system is organised, young people feel listened to, and know how to make their needs known. One young person commented, 'staff listen to me, but I can talk to anyone'. Young people are included in the home's social group and activities. Young people feel part of the group and are not isolated.

Young people receive consistent levels of support to learn new things and to develop their self-confidence and independence. Young people are encouraged, to take part in activities for daily living, meal preparation and to prepare snacks. However, an initial assessment of each young person's level of understanding and their skill level

has not been undertaken. This does not help members of staff to know what tasks a young person can already do and what levels of support are necessary to learn new skills. Young people may not fully develop their independence. One social worker said, 'the home is in regular contact about my young person and the quality of the information I receive is very high'. Young people have health care plans in place which outline what their health care needs are and how they will be met. Members of staff are aware of each young person's health needs and ensure they are met. This helps young people to stay fit and healthy.

Young people living at the home no longer attend full-time education because of their age. However, the on-going education and training of young people is given a very high priority. Attendance at college, training and the local job centre is actively encouraged and supported. One young person said, 'I've been to the job centre and been working on my CV, but not sure what I want to do.' A social worker said, 'my young person has been responding well to consistent messages and methods of working'. The positive encouragement of young people to attend college, training or to seek employment means they will have better life chances as they get older.

Where appropriate, young people are supported and enabled to remain in contact with their families and friends. This helps young people to maintain relationships with those who are important to them and to maintain a sense of identity.

Quality of care

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

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff members which are based on mutual respect and understanding. The home provides a warm comfortable and supportive environment in which young people can develop both physically and emotionally. The care planning systems used within the home are good although the care plan information is spread across several different documents. Essential information may be missed and the young person will not be able to navigate their way through all the documentation easily. The manager and members of staff monitor the care plan information. This enables them to evaluate the care they provide and to identify any changes which may be necessary. Written records are maintained and any changes in need are identified and acted upon. Members of staff do try to fully involve young people in this process. Young people are involved in their care and members of staff try to help them to understand what it is the home is trying to achieve for them.

Members of staff are aware of each young person's strengths and they provide a very supportive environment in which they can develop their independence and learn new tasks. Members of staff display an enthusiastic and committed approach to caring for young people. They offer advice and support on how to stay fit and well. Members of staff encourage young people to lead an active lifestyle and to take regular exercise. One young person's social worker said, 'the home does realistic things with the young people. They don't spend vast amounts of money on expensive activities. Young people have to live within a budget when they leave so

it's good for them to learn quickly that some activities have to be budgeted for.' There are written records in place to show what each young person eats each week. These records show that the diet of all the young people is varied and provides a balance of fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people enjoy a well-balanced diet, which helps to keep them healthy. There is a very good approach within the home to promoting the health and well-being of young people.

The home has a thorough admissions process for young people. Members of staff work hard to ensure each young person enjoys a positive experience while living at the home and is able to develop socially, physically and emotionally. Responsible social workers have not provided the home with thorough and detailed written assessments of each young person's needs prior to admission. In addition, written placement plans have not been forthcoming. The home's manager has not been vocal enough in ensuring that all essential written information has been received. This means that the home is providing care to young people based on information given to them verbally by social workers which may not be entirely accurate. The needs of young people may not be fully met.

The home has a detailed complaints process and young people are encouraged to voice their concerns. Members of staff spoken to said, they listen to what young people have to say and that they try to resolve any issues they might have promptly. One young person said, 'I'll talk to anyone if I'm not happy.' Young people are able to make their needs known and to raise formal complaints if they are unhappy about anything. This helps them to feel cared for and content.

Young people enjoy living in a rural area and are able to participate in a range of purposeful and enjoyable activities, which includes shopping trips, visits to local leisure centres and attending local clubs and societies. Each young person has their own bedroom and they are encouraged to make them as comfortable and personal as possible. There is a television in the lounge where young people can relax. One young person said, 'it's ok here.' The home also has a dining area where members of staff and young people can socialise, enjoy a meal together and talk informally. One young person is responsible for feeding chickens that live on land next to the home. This helps young people to take responsibility for chores which need doing and to develop their understanding of the world around them.

Relationships between members of staff and young people are very warm and friendly. Members of staff strive to provide an environment in which young people can be happy and flourish. Two comments from social workers include, 'from what I've seen, relationships between staff and young people are very positive' and 'the home's very welcoming and easy to work with'. Young people feel comfortable at the home and understand that members of staff are there to help them.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

There are clear systems in place within the home to safeguard young people. Risk

assessments have been carried out in the home and these have been regularly monitored and updated in line with changing circumstances or behaviours of young people. Young people are fully protected and kept safe from harm. A social worker said, 'my young person's more than safe here. I've been very impressed with contact and so far we're making joint decisions particularly about how to manage their behaviour'. There have been no occasions when a young person has been missing from the home. The home's policies and procedures for dealing with missing children are compatible with and have regard to the local Runaway and Missing from Home and Care protocols.

The manager and all members of staff are fully trained in safeguarding. They receive regular refresher training to keep their skills and knowledge up to date. This helps to keep young people safe and protected from potential abuse.

Members of staff promote a culture of positive behaviour within the home and young people are supported to take responsibility for their actions. Members of staff prefer to use listening techniques, discussions with young people and encouragement to help them achieve positive changes in their behaviour. Only where absolutely necessary are sanctions used to help promote positive behaviour. Since the home opened there have been no instances where a young person has been formally sanctioned or restrained. Records relating to any sanctions or restraints that may be necessary are in place although they are not retained within bound and numbered volumes used specifically for those purposes. This helps young people to develop more appropriate ways to deal with any stress, anxiety or difficulties they may be facing.

The home's manager ensures that all safety checks needed within the home are undertaken to ensure the safety of young people, visitors and members of staff. The manager also ensures that appropriate and regular checks of the home's fire systems, smoke detectors and emergency lighting are carried out. Young people understand the fire evacuation process and practice fire drills. Full written records are maintained by the home's manager. Risk assessments are available with regard to the general building and also in relation to the young people themselves. Risk assessments are clear and regularly reviewed. Young people live in a safe environment and their safety is protected.

The home has only recently opened and all members of staff have been newly appointed. The home's recruitment process is thorough and helps to ensure that only those who are suitable to work with young people are employed. Visitors to the home are asked to identify themselves on arrival and to sign the visitor's book. Young people are protected by the home's recruitment procedures and are kept safe from having unsuitable staff working within the home.

Leadership and management

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

The home meets the aims and objectives set out in its Statement of Purpose. The

young people's guide to the home is clearly written and provides important information, which young people may need. However, the young people's guide does not include the contact details for the Children's Rights Director or their independent reviewing officers. Young people know what they can expect from living at the home, although not the names of all those who they can speak to if they are worried about anything.

Young people's files are detailed. Written information retained within the home provides a record of each young person's life there as well as the help and support carried out by staff members. House meetings involving the young people take place at regular intervals and their opinions are listened to. Young people and staff members discuss activities that the young people may wish to try as well as different meals they might like to sample. This helps young people to develop their confidence, self-esteem and to experience full range of life experiences. Monitoring visits from someone independent of the home take place every month. The person undertaking these visits makes a real attempt to engage young people in conversation and to seek their opinions regard to how the home is run. Young people contribute to improving the quality of their care.

The organisation demonstrates a commitment to training. All members of staff have received training in a number of areas which help to safeguard and protect the welfare of children. Written records indicate that all training is up to date. Staff members spoken to were able to demonstrate an understanding of the home's complaints process, safeguarding and health and safety. The welfare of young people is therefore safeguarded. The home's manager ensures that all members of staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis. One member of staff said, 'we get regular supervision but we're also able to ask the manager things whenever we like, her door's always open. The staff team here are great as well, we all support each other; it's a good place to work'. In addition regular staff meetings are also held. This helps staff members to feel supported in their work.

The home's manager provides effective management and has systems in place to ensure that the quality of care is regularly monitored. Any problem areas which may be identified are attended to and appropriate action taken. The organisation and the home have development plans in place. The home's manager and members of staff are aware of the home's strengths and weaknesses.

Staff members are both enthusiastic and motivated and are encouraged to create new opportunities for the young people living at the home. One young person spoken to said, 'the staff are alright'.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.