

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC454484
Inspection date	23/05/2013
Inspector	Debbie Foster
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	15/11/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is owned by the local authority. This setting provides five long-term placements for young people between 10- 18 years old, who may need support with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This long-standing service has recently moved to new premises.

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 receive an excellent level of care. This is enabling young people to make exceptional progress in most aspects of their lives and bring outstanding outcomes. Other professionals recognise the significant progress young people have made from the starting point of moving to live at the home. Care planning is specifically personalised, bringing improved health, keeping young people safe, improving educational attendance, attainment and successfully establishing independence and daily living skills. A variety of systems are in place to ensure young people have the opportunity to contribute to their individual care plans and the running of the home.

Young people are safe and feel safe. Staff have a wealth of knowledge and understanding of all young people. They take effective action to ensure young people's vulnerabilities and the risks they face in the home and the community are effectively managed to keep young people safe from unnecessary harm. Young people's relationships with staff are very strong and this ensures young people feel safe, secure and well cared for.

Management arrangements are excellent. Staff have high aspirations and are motivated about helping young people achieve the best in their lives regardless of their needs and backgrounds. Staff are keen, child centred and effectively supported through good quality training and supervision. This is backed up by a strong commitment to high standards, regular monitoring of care practice and a continuous drive for improvement.

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **outstanding**.

Young people are making exceptional progress in developing positive self-confidence, keeping safe, educationally and in life skills. Young people's school attendance is excellent and contact between the home and school is frequent and effective. Where educational challenges exist for young people, the staff work rigorously and effectively with the school and other professionals to give the very best support. A social worker said 'X has come on in all areas, socially, emotionally and in education, she has good relationships with the staff, especially her key worker. The staff work excellently with school and have X best interests at heart.' This brings highly positive changes for individual young people. This demonstrates staff are supporting young people to develop aspirations for their future and in the place of work. As a result, young people flourish in a nurturing environment.

Young people enjoy good health. Their health needs are thoroughly assessed when they come to the home and extremely detailed health plans ensure that their progress is monitored and their needs are met. Young people are fully supported to attend all routine and specialist health appointments. They enjoy healthy lifestyles and are encouraged to take an active interest in looking after their own health. A young person said 'staff help me to follow a healthy diet.' Young people benefit from the excellent advice they are given by staff on a wide range of health and social issues including the risks attached to smoking, alcohol and substance misuse. This has resulted in high risk taking behaviour ceasing to take place. Young people are actively involved in physical pursuits which enhance their well-being. A young person said 'I go to the gym and Zumba classes every week; this helps me to keep fit.' Young people have a very good understanding on how to keep themselves healthy.

The daily life of the home enables young people to develop their life skills in preparation for independence. A young person said 'I'm doing really well with my independence; I'm cooking meals from scratch, and budgeting my money.' Young people also learn how to make their own appointments with other agencies, such as the doctor and dentist and routinely undertake house hold chores. This is excellent practice as these opportunities help to develop young people's confidence, their knowledge and skills. Young people often keep in touch with staff after they leave the home to let staff know how they are doing. This shows that they have developed positive relationships with staff that continue after they leave care and that they feel confident that staff are interested in their welfare.

Young people benefit greatly from the support they are given to build and maintain positive contact with family and friends. This helps to reinforce their sense of their own identity as well as enabling them to keep in touch with people who are important to them. A young person said 'I see my family regularly.' A social worker stated 'staff facilitate and assist the young person in keeping in touch with their family well and positive relationships have been built. They know that family is very important to them.'

Quality of care

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

Staff wish for young people to succeed and achieve their very best. As such the well-being of individual young people is central to the high quality of care practice. Staff provide young people with a very caring, homely and friendly environment. A young person stated 'the best thing about living here, is the staff.' Young people have very good rapport and relationships with staff which helps them feel at home.

Staff provide care in a way that effectively promotes young people's welfare regardless of the challenges they present. Diverse needs such as age, vulnerability, personal safety and lifestyle choices are all very effectively promoted. Young people are fully involved in the running of the home. For example, they contribute to plans for the decoration, garden, decide on menus, and plan their week's activities with help from staff. This contributes to keeping young people at the heart of what goes on in the home.

Very high standards of care are also based upon detailed in-house care plans, including risk assessments. These are very clear about a young person's individual needs and the support they require. Staff are careful in following these plans to ensure they consider and respect young people's views and needs. Staff also motivate young people effectively to further themselves in learning new skills, develop their independence and take more responsibility for their lives. Staff are able to demonstrate the progress young people are making from the starting point of their placement at the home. This is reinforced by good detail in their individual care plans of the progress and positive outcomes young people have achieved.

Staff are very proactive in supporting young people to have continuity in their education both at school and college. There is excellent partnership working with other agencies including schools, social workers, mental health workers and parents. A learning mentor commented, 'staff, positively communicate with us on a frequent basis, they always proactively support X with her school work.' There is a constant strive to break down barriers that prevent young people from having opportunities that facilitate them to be actively involved in life outside the home. Staff ensure that crucial support is provided to young people so that they may progress in most aspects of their welfare and development.

Young people benefit greatly from living in a home that is maintained to a very high standard. The service has moved property in the last six months, and the young people have been actively involved in the move, decoration and the furnishing of the property. This has ensured the move has been a positive one for all young people and they have settled in well. The home is well decorated, comfortably furnished, clean and tidy. Young people personalise their rooms. The home is kept safe through rigorous health and safety checks and risk assessments. It is suitably located, near to good transport links to access the city centre and local amenities. Young people say that they like their home, that they feel safe and comfortable there. One young

person commented, 'this is our home, it's lovely and it is kept very nice.'

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff, based on mutual respect. This provides a strong foundation for the development of positive behaviour. One young person said, 'there are not many rules, but I know what they are, if we break the rules we get a sanction; staff do explain to us why, but these aren't very often and the staff are fair.' Staff have been trained in positive behaviour management and appropriate use of restraint; they work closely together to consolidate ways of managing behaviour in a positive way. As a result, the use of restraint is very rare. The effectiveness of sanctions is closely monitored by the manager.

The home has a broad range of policies and procedures for safeguarding practice in respect of: child protection, handling allegations, young people going missing or absent without authority, and countering bullying. Staff are trained in safeguarding. They are clear about their role and responsibilities and competent in implementing procedures in order to safeguard young people. This protects young people from potential hazards and harm. Young people say they feel safe in the home.

There are exceptionally clear risk assessments and very effective risk management strategies in place to protect young people. Staff are creative and proactive in providing young people opportunities to learn from risk taking that is appropriate to their needs and backgrounds. Young people are actively involved with the staff to recognise areas of risk in their lives. Clear action plans are devised and on-going direct work with young people reduces the risks identified. Risk management strategies are regularly monitored and reviewed to reflect the changing needs and development of young people. There is strong planning and involvement of other appropriate safeguarding agencies in agreeing safe routines and boundaries.

When they arrive at the home, some young people have a history of going missing and therefore of being at risk. Staff have proactive working relationship with the designated missing persons officers and clearly understand the steps they take if a young person does go missing. Staff are very successful in the work they do with individual young people. There have been no incidents of young going missing of a significant period. Young people now recognise the risks and dangers of such behaviour. This ensures that steps are taken to keep safe.

Young people are protected from unsuitable visitors to the home by close monitoring and checking of visitors. Regular maintenance checks ensure the building is safe and appropriately secure. Regular fire drills take place and fire alarm systems are checked regularly. There is a comprehensive fire and health and safety assessment for the building and equipment. This upholds the safety of young people.

Leadership and management

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

Young people live in a home that is well resourced in terms of the high quality care received from a stable, highly experienced and skilled staff group who are committed to accomplishing excellent outcomes for young people. The manager provides strong and effective leadership and has an inclusive open style which staff value and reflect in their practice with young people. The management team have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the home. Robust monitoring brings effective identification of short falls in the service where immediate action is taken to improve practice accordingly. A development plan is in place with clear targets which enables excellent standards and quality of care to continue for young people.

Two recommendations made at the last inspection have been actively acted upon. Consequently, outcomes for young people are improved relating to; placement plans which clearly document the progress made by young people. This demonstrates fully the success and achievements the young people have made since coming to live at the home. Young people live in an environment where bullying does not exist, to ensure they feel safe and secure.

Young people are successfully looked after by staff that are excellently supported through effective supervision, relevant training and productive team meetings and handovers. All staff have the National Vocation Qualification level 3 in caring for children and young people. Staff are kept up-to-date with practice developments and receive identified specialist training. The manager ensures that the home fulfils its commitment to young people's needs and as stipulated in the Statement of Purpose and children's guide.

Young people benefit greatly from the strong relationships the staff have built with other professionals who support young people to ensure their health, care and education needs are met in full.

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.