

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC005048
Inspection date	20/06/2012
Inspector	Amanda Ellis
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	20/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for eight young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is owned by a private company.

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**.

Children living at this home experience an outstanding service. Effective management and staff teams provide an exceptional quality of care. Children are valued and develop within this service. Safeguarding practices are sound and children learn how to keep themselves safe. Children are safe and say they feel safe. The home provides clear individualised, well-planned care taking into account the diverse needs of children. The outcomes achieved by children are exceptional and the impact that the home has had in supporting this progress and achieving these outcomes is clearly evidenced

Children are encouraged to be involved in planning and reviewing their care. They participate in the running of the home. Children receive high levels of support and guidance to attend and achieve at school. They are encouraged to participate in a wide range of activities. Children have their health promoted and are taught how to keep themselves healthy. Children receive support from a committed, knowledgeable and experienced staff team. Relationships between children and staff are excellent and children are positive about the home, staff, manager and quality of care.

The Registered Manager of this home has significant experience and knowledge which ensure high standards are maintained. However, he strives for continual improvement and can identify areas of further development needed to secure this positive attitude to improvement.

One shortfall identified within this inspection relate to the maintenance of some bedroom furniture and their repair or replacement.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure the home provides a comfortable and homely environment and is well maintained and decorated, with particular regard to the timely repair of evidence of damage to furniture. (NMS 10.3)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children thrive and develop within this home. They benefit from significantly improved emotional resilience and a positive self-view. Children develop positive attachments and relationships with carers, and their behaviour becomes significantly more positive and productive as a result of consistency in care and boundaries. This results in consistently planned placement endings and positive transitions for children to future and permanent placements.

Children's health and well-being are successfully promoted because the home provides an environment where their physical, psychological and emotional needs are met. Staff are knowledgeable and aware of individual needs. Children have detailed health care plans as part of their wider placement plan. Children receive routine health care to ensure they have good health outcomes. Children with specific health issues receive appropriate support and care to meet their needs. Examples include a child who no longer needs to take medication to help manage his behaviours.

Children have 100% school attendance and make exceptional progress in education. Staff ensure that attendance is supported and consistent. School and home staff have effective daily communication regarding children. Children benefit from the consistency in care which this provides.

The children benefit from appropriate contact with family, friends, and other people who are important to them. The staff team work sensitively and flexibly to promote positive contacts. Specifically tailored contact arrangements are organised wherever possible, according to the needs of those involved, for the benefit of the children. A social care professional commented on how hard the home worked to maintain and promote safe contact.

The development of independence is encouraged according to the age and ability of the children. Children learn to take some responsibility for cleaning their bedrooms, managing their laundry, and helping with tidying the home. All children have their own bank account and are taught to budget. Independence skills form part of the daily routine of the home. This helps children to develop appropriate self-care and

independence skills in readiness for moving placements and eventually leaving care.

Quality of care

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

Children receive an outstanding quality of care at the home. Staff demonstrate dedication and commitment to their work. Children flourish with the quality of the care they receive. Children develop positive and constructive relationships with the staff team and with each other. All children said that one of the best things about the home were the staff. Children thrive because of effective relationships with staff.

Children's care includes the involvement of the home's education, care and therapeutic staff. In addition, staff build exceptionally effective partnerships with external agencies and social work services. One social worker commented 'They are very focused on the child's individual needs. Staff are very warm and caring and demonstrate good relationships with children.'

Children make a positive contribution to the home through daily and weekly meetings, monthly consultations and contributing to decisions about their care. Management ensure the views of children are reflected in the running of the home. Consequently, through different methods, the children can express their views on the quality of their care.

Staff are highly skilled at helping children to understand why it may not be possible to act upon their wishes and to set clear boundaries. Children's behaviours improve and they learn socially acceptable behaviours because staff implement consistent rules and are clear about expectations.

Children receive a children's guide which contains information on their care, advocacy, contacts and the details for Ofsted. There have been no complaints since the last inspection. Children know how to make a complaint to staff and outside agencies. The complaints procedure is on the notice board in an appropriate format; the weekly children's meetings ensure that complaints are included. Children have access to their own telephone to make private calls with relevant details for children's rights organisations. Children say that they feel listened to and that their views taken into consideration.

Care planning, risk assessments and behaviour management plans are comprehensive, detailed and up to date. Plans are reviewed regularly and consistently and are audited by the manager. Children receive consistent care because their care planning is clear and detailed. This provides staff with clarity to provide effective support to children.

Children are actively involved in all aspects of their care planning. Each child has a monthly meeting with their keyworker and then the manager to review their progress and placement plan. Consequently, children are able to make choices and contribute to their care plans. Written plans reflect the individuality and diversity of children.

There is a clear commitment to promoting equality and diversity, which ensures the promotion of children's individual needs.

The home provides a healthy environment which ensures that children have access to a range of services. The home routinely liaises with relevant health care professionals to provide the very best care for the children. The home has its own therapeutic service which provides art and play therapy to each child, training and consultation to the staff team and liaison with the wider mental health service. Medication is very well managed. Children learn about healthy lifestyles, participate in physical activities and receive a highly nutritious diet with freshly cooked meals throughout the day. The home has received awards for their healthy eating and excellent standards of food hygiene.

The home has a school on site and this facility received an outstanding judgement from Ofsted at their last inspection in 2010. The home has a strong ethos about all children attending and achieving in school. Many of the children have not attended or positively engaged with the education system for an extensive period of time prior to coming to the home. All of the children have re-engaged with education since coming to the home. Children express that they are extremely positive about attending school and proud of their significant achievements and improvements in behaviour. The children wear a school uniform, have clear education plans and receive individualised support. Children develop the skills, confidence and knowledge to participate in the National Curriculum, with some moving to mainstream schools.

Children are encouraged to try new activities. They routinely take part in a broad variety of leisure pursuits. There are outdoor activities specialists within the staff team and dedicated time for outdoor pursuits, including climbing, trekking, mountain biking, horse riding, fishing and camping. In addition, there are opportunities for learning to play a musical instrument and singing, with tuition from a music specialist. Children benefit from private swimming lessons. These opportunities provide children with a range of ways to explore their talents and skills and thereby build confidence and self-esteem.

The home is spacious, homely, beautifully decorated, and very well maintained. All children have chosen the décor of their bedrooms. The furniture is of a good standard; however, some bedroom furniture has not been sufficiently robust and is in need of repair. The home is in a rural area and has substantial grounds with its own gardens; football pitch; outdoor play areas and play equipment. All children have their own bikes. The home also keeps some pigs which the children help to care for

The promotion of equality and diversity is a key feature of the operation of the home. The staff team demonstrate sensitivity and a firm commitment to assessing and understanding the individual needs of all children. Children are encouraged to understand their own individuality and to respect and celebrate the diversity of others.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children are safe and say unequivocally that they feel safe. Children are kept safe through excellent working practices and comprehensive risk assessments which are regularly updated. Staff have a solid understanding of safeguarding issues and consistently review safe working practices to ensure they meet individual children's needs. Staffing levels and the use of waking night staff demonstrate that the safety and well-being of the children are paramount. On occasions, a small number of staff are used to provide additional cover. These staff members are well-known to the children and are employees of the care company.

There have been no reported incidents of children going missing from the home since the last inspection. However, the home has clear procedures in place to notify the relevant bodies in the event of a child going missing. Informal visits from a local police officer further enhance the excellent safeguarding culture at the home. Staff have a good understanding of the relevant policies and procedures and implement them when necessary.

Staff promote positive behaviour for children at all times. Children benefit from individualised reward and incentive schemes and are encouraged to take responsibility for their behaviour. Children say that the rules of the home are fair, and records demonstrate that good behaviour is recognised and rewarded.

Children benefit from clear and appropriate risk assessment, which is individualised and effectively managed. They are able to take age-appropriate risks in line with agreed care plans.

The use of physical restraint in the home is minimal. Staff who undertake any restraints are suitably trained. It is used as a last resort when a child is placing themselves or others at risk. As a result of the behaviour management practices children learn to improve in their interaction with staff and each other. Recording of such incidents is in line with the legislative framework. Children have the opportunity to speak with staff following the use of any restraint and their views recorded as a significant event on their individual case files.

Staff employed to work in the home experience a rigorous selection process prior to taking up their positions. There have been no staff members leave since the last inspection. Three new members of staff have been recruited to provide staff support and cover for staff holidays. Robust recruitment processes and the recording and monitoring of visitors to the home further ensure the protection of children from potential harm.

There have been no allegations made since the last inspection and no complaints. Children report no incidents of bullying within the home.

The home is physically safe for the children. Maintenance within the home is of a

high standard, with staff implementing consistent monitoring and security to ensure the safety of children.

Leadership and management

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

Children benefit from a home that strives for excellence and improving the outcomes for children. The home demonstrates capacity for continuing improvement, based on its track record and performance since the last inspection. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection. However, the home continues to develop. One example is staff being designated responsibilities which utilise their specialist skills.

There is a clear, well written Statement of Purpose, which accurately reflects the aims, ethos and facilities offered to children. The children's guide is informative and is available in two formats for both younger and older children. It contains all the information specified in the national minimum standards to give children all the relevant information they might need.

The key strengths of the home are the range of skills, commitment and dedication which the staff team make to the delivery of the service. The staff team are stable, dedicated and have solid experience. This means that children receive sound and safe care.

Children benefit from effective management and monitoring of the home. The Registered Manager undertakes rigorous routine monitoring activities, in addition to the independent monitoring visits by an independent person. These systems ensure that children receive a consistently high quality of care. Children and stakeholders routinely feedback their views on the care provided and outcomes achieved to inform potential improvements and shape the service.

The Registered Manager is able to demonstrate how the quality of care provided to children has improved their life chances. The monitoring and review of placement targets and timescales shared with each child. This enables children to see their improvements and how they are meeting their own targets. The strengths and weaknesses of the home are recognised by the Registered Manager and are used to inform future practice.

Staff benefit from excellent training. They access a range of occupational and vocational training which underpins their practice. Staff also receive training to complete outdoor activity courses to enable staff to lead activities with children. All staff are suitably qualified and receive regular, good quality supervision. They say that they are able to seek advice and support when necessary. The manager confirms that he is very well supported and that the management team meet regularly. The home is financially well-resourced and is working effectively within the allocated budgets.

Children's records are very good, records are clear, up to date and stored securely, therefore ensuring that records contribute to an understanding of their lives. Children are being encouraged to participate in work to record their time at the home. Children benefit from staff helping them complete Life Story work in very creative ways.

The Registered Manager has systems in place to notify relevant agencies, including Ofsted, of significant events to ensure the protection of children by multi-agency decision making. No notifications have been necessary since the last inspection.

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.