

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC355902
Inspection date	27/06/2012
Inspector	Paul Taylor
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	10/01/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© Crown copyright 2012

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

The setting offers care and accommodation for up to six young people aged from eight to 17 years. Children and young people are normally placed at the home for medium- to long-term periods, although emergency and short-term placements are also provided. The home is run by a private organisation.

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**.

This is an effective home which provides consistent and well-planned care and achieves positive outcomes for young people, ensuring that they make good progress during their placement. All of the young people are complimentary regarding their placement, and feel that the service helps them within all areas of their lives. They speak highly of the support that they receive from members of staff. One young person commented, 'This is like a home, they understand me.'

The motivated and conscientious staff team is a strength within the home. Good management and support has significantly improved morale and the quality of care since the last inspection. An external professional commented, 'The staff go that extra mile.' Young people benefit from sound relationships with staff and feel that they are safe and well cared for in the home.

Very good links are maintained with stakeholders and statutory agencies and the home effectively and swiftly pursues any incidents relating to young people's safety and well-being.

Issues arising from this inspection relate to ensuring that all details are contained in every record of restraint and that all members of staff know the system for the administration of medication and implement it consistently. In addition, the practice of locking the kitchen at night is in need of review as this has not been endorsed by placing authorities and carers.

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
17B (2001)	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control restraint or discipline in a children's home, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the duration of the measure of restraint. (Regulation 17 (B) (4) (a))	29/06/2012

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff consistently record all medication, treatment and first aid given to children during their placement. (This is with regards to all staff knowing the system and using it consistently) (NMS6)
- ensure that physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are not used unless this is necessary to safeguard children and promote their welfare and development. Such measures are only used where agreed with the responsible authority and, if appropriate, the parents. Such restrictions do not impose similar restrictions on other children. (NMS 10.4)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people make good progress during their time in the home, especially when taking into account their starting points at the time of admission. They benefit from being able to make trusting relationships with members of staff. They are offered close support and this enables them to make sense of their histories and background and helps them to feel valued and understood. They have their individual identities valued and respected and this increases their self-esteem and self-worth.

Young people have their health needs promoted to a good standard. Specifically, they have their emotional and psychological well-being nurtured and specialist support put in place if it is needed. Due to the support they receive, young people's awareness of risks associated with certain behaviours, such as alcohol misuse, smoking as well as sexual health issues, is raised.

Young people prosper from living in a home where their views and welfare are seen as central to practice. They gain from being able to voice their opinions in a number of forums and this enables them to feel confident that they have a voice and an impact on living in the home.

Young people benefit from living in a home where education is valued and promoted. They receive close support to attend school and to have positive educational experiences. If young people are without a school or college placement they are assisted to attend educational activities in the home. This is in order to embed a routine and expectation that they will take part in education once they have an identified placement. Young people gain from having the staff team advocate strongly on their behalf to ensure that they have educational placements identified.

Young people enjoy the variety of activities in which they are able to take part. Additionally, they are able to go on holidays with members of staff and report that these are 'a good laugh'. All young people report that they are kept busy and have enough to do, as well as having enough time to relax in non-structured activities, such as meeting friends.

While none of the young people at the home are on the verge of living independently, they are all provided with opportunities and programmes designed to increase their life and independence skills. Their skills around keeping safe, budgeting, self-care and cooking are developed to a very good standard.

Quality of care

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

Young people benefit from care that meets their needs and that helps them to progress to a significant degree. Staff are child-focused and there is a strong emphasis on the individual needs of young people.

Care plans clearly reflect young people's identity needs and how the home supports them to develop a positive self-image and to develop their self-esteem and confidence.

Young people benefit from positive relationships with the staff team who know them well, and understand their strengths and care needs. They feel that the staff care about their welfare and help them in all areas of their lives. Young people benefit from plentiful opportunities to consult with members of staff, the manager and external professionals. The approach ensures that young people are confident and are able to make comments or complaints about how they feel they are being cared for. They are helped to manage their own behaviour and use the strategies that staff suggest to good effect. Risk-taking behaviour is assessed to ensure that strategies and plans are in place to support the young people and reduce the risks. For example, strategies related to going out without permission or becoming involved in aggressive behaviour when they are angry or upset have helped the young people to

reduce these incidents.

Young people are supported to make good educational progress. Care plans clearly set out young people's abilities and goals and this helps to tailor education to individual needs. Staff also engage young people in educational activities, especially if recent admissions do not have educational placements identified. Barriers to education are effectively challenged by staff. For example, staff attend school with young people to provide support where this is appropriate. As a result, young people are enabled to make good educational progress, especially when bearing in mind their starting points. Young people are enthusiastic about the activities they engage in. They are enabled by staff to gain new experiences and engage in positive and enriching activities.

Young people receive good health care and have their emotional and psychological well-being promoted to a particularly high standard. The home actively pursues appointments with health care specialists, if needed, and will advocate strongly on behalf of young people in order to improve their access to services, such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The home has ready access to a psychologist who visits the home at least once a week to offer support and advice to the young people as well as the staff team. This input enables staff to provide consistent and well thought out support.

The system to administer medication is mostly accurate and followed well. However, there was a minor shortfall identified where it was not clear if a young person had a tablet administered or if the new record had been filled in properly.

The staff team work very closely and consistently, especially with managing and supporting young people's behaviour and progress. Emphasis is placed upon enabling them to develop positive behaviour and social skills. Young people report that they feel they are treated fairly. They feel that they are actively involved in the development of their care plans and in identifying what support they need at times of distress. One young person commented, 'They have helped me to calm down quickly when I get angry.'

The home is well maintained and comfortable. Significant effort is made to ensure that the décor is of a good standard and there has been substantial refurbishment since the last inspection. Young people are able to choose the décor and furnishings and this approach enables them to feel an investment in their environment and that their views and preferences are valued and responded to.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people report feeling safe and well looked after at the home. They feel that the staff are concerned with their welfare and will take steps to make sure they feel safe. They report that bullying is not seen as an issue in the home and they are confident that staff will address any issues of conflict should these arise.

Clear protocols, and a high awareness of each young person's vulnerability if they go missing, ensure that any incidents are reported swiftly and effectively to the relevant agencies, including the police. This approach has led to a reduction, in most cases, of incidents where young people have gone missing or have gone out without permission. Any protocols in place are in line with local police strategies and policies. This ensures that the home and police can work closely together in the event that a vulnerable young person is missing or absent without permission. Members of staff work conscientiously to enable young people to return to the home if they are absent without permission. This includes constant telephone contact as well as searches of the areas where the young person might be.

The use of restraint in the home is minimal. Young people report that it is only used when needed and that it is used fairly and effectively. Records are generally appropriate; however, on one occasion the length of time a young person had been held was not recorded.

The home has a very clear recruitment process which ensures that all checks for prospective employees are thoroughly carried out before they can commence work. This ensures that only adults with acceptable employment and personal histories are allowed to work with the young people.

The home has very effective links with external agencies and these ensure that any issues relating to young people's welfare are swiftly passed on so that protection and support for young people is seen as paramount.

The home is well maintained and safe. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. This ensures that all members of staff are aware of each young person's vulnerabilities and what measures need to be put in place to promote their safety. The kitchen door is locked at night to ensure that the young people cannot gain access to dangerous items or the gas cooker unsupervised. This is an embedded practice and has not been reviewed to reflect changes in the young people's group. While all members of staff and young people are aware of this practice, placing authorities or parents have not endorsed the practice in a written record.

Leadership and management

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

The service has an experienced management team which provides good oversight and monitoring of the operation of the home. Continuous improvement is enabled by regular and effective monitoring of the quality of provision. Stakeholders' opinions, including those of young people, parents and placing social workers, are sought on a regular basis. The approach is open and welcoming of any comments from any stakeholder. This encourages a reflective analysis of the service with a view to improving quality and outcomes.

The new manager, who works closely with the owners of the home, has ensured that

all members of staff feel very well supported and that their views are valued.

Monitoring visits are undertaken on a regular basis. Reports written as a result of these point out any specific shortfalls. An action plan is then put in place to show how these have been rectified. The manager ensures that his assessment and monitoring of the home analyses trends and identifies areas that need to be improved. These reports have been forwarded to Ofsted. Recommendations and requirements made at previous inspections have been met in a timely and efficient manner.

Good records are kept which analyse and show how young people benefit from living in the home. An example of this is the records maintained of how incidents involving the young people have lessened over time. Weekly reports sent to placing authorities also confirm each young person's progress.

The home is kept in good condition and is sufficiently resourced to ensure that young people benefit from good-quality furnishings and a comfortable environment.

The home has enough staff available to ensure that the young people receive the support they need in order to make progress and to feel safe. The staff team is a very committed group of people who ensure that each young person's needs are central to their practice. Regular training ensures they have the skills, knowledge and confidence to work with the young people that the home accommodates and to offer a good standard of care. Staff report good team working, a good atmosphere and close support from the manager and senior members of staff. There is unanimous feedback from members of staff that the morale of the team and consistency in care has improved since the arrival of the new manager.

Members of staff keep good evidence of how they ensure that young people's social workers visit on a regular basis. All young people report that they have good contact with their social workers and that their key workers help them achieve this.

Records maintained give a good history of each young person's experience of living in the home and show how each young person has progressed and what are their aspirations and targets. Weekly reports sent to social workers give an informative narrative of each young person's progress and experience in the home. All records are stored securely.

All significant events are passed on to the relevant agencies promptly and efficiently and a good record is kept of the incidents and how they have been resolved. This shows that the home effectively shares significant information with stakeholders and statutory agencies.

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.