

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC405985
Inspection date	05/07/2012
Inspector	Linda Leeder
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	09/03/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is a private provision which provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties aged between 11 and 17 years.

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**.

Young people make good progress, taking into account their starting points at the beginning of the placement. Young people attend education and work, and achieve good outcomes. Criminal behaviour and occasions when young people go missing from the home have reduced. Young people enjoy purposeful activities; contact with family is encouraged and young people gain positive skills that ensure a successful move to independent living. The home provides personalised, high-quality care plans that take into account the individual needs of each young person.

Young people have a high regard for the care provided for them by the staff at the home. Staff are proactive in challenging barriers to obtain good outcomes for young people. The motivated staff have built excellent relationships with young people. Young people are respected and, therefore, young people respect the boundaries placed on them by the staff. Young people are not restrained and are provided with the skills to manage their behaviour. Young people's achievements are celebrated. Young people are supported in regards to their physical, emotional and psychological health and make good progress.

Young people are safe and feel safe. There are robust procedures in place to ensure their continued safety and staff are knowledgeable and proactive in response to child protection. Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible and are responded to positively on their return. There are competent procedures in regards to bullying and young people report that bullying is not tolerated and is well managed by staff.

The home is efficiently and effectively managed. The quality of care is monitored by the Registered Manager and these provide the basis for improvements. A plan is in place to look at further development of the home. The home has sufficient and effective staff. They receive regular, good-quality and challenging supervision. Training is provided to ensure that staff keep up to date and improve their practice. There are robust procedures in place for the vetting and monitoring of staff to ensure the continued safety of young people.

The home has developed good relationships with the local community in which young people participate.

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people are developing a positive self-view, emotional resilience and understanding and confidence in their skills. For example, young people have realistic plans for the future and want to better themselves. They are making plans to go to college, begin apprenticeships and develop careers. This positive attitude within the home provides young people with the ability to progress in their lives and achieve good-quality outcomes.

Young people are generally healthy. Young people do smoke but this is not encouraged by staff and help has been sought from the smoking cessation nurse. Young people are encouraged to take exercise; they participate in football matches and go swimming. Young people are encouraged to try different types of food and are discouraged from eating foods that do not benefit them nutritionally. Young people are provided with a balanced and nutritional diet.

This provision provides support for young people's emotional and psychological health. They work closely with external agencies, when it is appropriate to do so, to ensure that young people's emotional and psychological needs are met. This is shown in the progress that young people have made, especially in regard to the reduction of aggressive and criminal behaviour. Social workers from the Youth Offending team reported that they rarely applied for an early revocation of a criminal court order; they commented that, 'this indicates the progress [YP] has made.' This ensures that young people have robust emotional resources that will encourage successful and positive outcomes.

The home has a strong educational and work ethos. Young people are attending educational provisions appropriate to their needs or employment. Attendance at school and work is positively encouraged. The home has supported young people to obtain work and sustain work placements. The home has strong working relationships with young people's education and work providers. The home encourages young people to benefit from all types of education and young people use e-learning, facilitated by trained staff, to improve their skills and add to their educational attainments. The home has had considerable success in motivating young people to attend and achieve in education, taking into account their starting

points in their learning at the time of placement. This enthusiastic emphasis on education and work supports good outcomes for young people.

Young people experience a wide and varied range of activities. These include writing and recording songs and raps, sharing meals together that the young people cook, paintballing and bowling. The home organised football matches between the homes in the group which encouraged physical exercise and supportive friendships.

Contact between the young people and their families is positively encouraged, well supported and competently managed. For example, contact has been reduced and has remained supervised with family members who are not supportive of young people or because they encourage risky behaviours. The home welcomes young people's friends and family to the home when this is appropriate. This has ensured that young people have access to significant people in their lives while keeping young people safe.

Independence skills are supported to ensure that young people can make a successful transition to independence and adult life. Young people are expected to cook for themselves on occasions, clean their rooms and travel by public transport when appropriate. They are encouraged to manage a budget, clean their own clothes and keep appointments. The home has provided support and guidance for young people once they have moved on to independent accommodation. The independence activities, supported by the home, provide successful skills in order that young people can provide for themselves in adult life.

Quality of care

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

Young people have excellent positive and constructive relationships with staff. Young people report that 'staff listen and understand' them. Staff have built good, trustworthy and respectful relationships with young people. This has encouraged young people to behave appropriately with staff and other young people in the home. These relationships give young people the building blocks for positive behaviour and relationships in the future.

Staff give young people ample opportunity to express their views, wishes and feelings. Young people are listened to and are encouraged to use various mediums to express their feelings. Young people say, 'they [staff] remember little things I say and then try and help me achieve things - like my music.'

Young people know how to make a complaint and have used the process in a constructive and positive way. For example, young people wanted internet connection within the home. The issues for this facility were discussed with the young people and an agreement was devised that involved young people, parents and placing authorities. This encourages effective communication while ensuring that young people are safe.

Young people know that it is not always possible to act upon their wishes. Young people have said that they know that there needs to be rules. Young people are also aware of the consequences should they break the rules. Staff use individualised, positive behaviour strategies. Social workers report that, 'the home has a relaxed atmosphere but staff are in control.' They encourage young people to manage their own behaviour and this develops their skills in social interaction with their peers and with others in their community. For example, young people have developed positive relationships with neighbours and have helped them with gardening and other chores. Staff know young people well and can anticipate and understand their behaviour, supporting young people to also anticipate when they need to regulate any negative behaviour. These positive behaviour strategies provided by the staff are effective in providing young people with skills in managing conflict and developing valued relationships irrespective of the barriers that they experience.

Young people are cared for in line with their individual placement plan and the staff make good use of risk assessments regarding young people. Staff are proactive in reducing risks to their health. For example, staff worked with a smoking cessation nurse to reduce or stop young people smoking. The home also includes supportive significant people in plans, especially around emotionally difficult times like family contact. This level of support at the home provides a healthy environment where young people are able to access the services and assistance they need to meet their physical, emotional and psychological needs.

Staff consistently and effectively challenge barriers to ensure that young people can participate fully in their community and society. Social workers say that, 'despite negative attitudes from college staff, they [staff] have fought to get him moved to more appropriate educational provision.' The home has successfully maintained young people in work placements and supported young people after they have left the home and moved on to independence. This encourages sustained positive outcomes for young people.

Staff are very proud of the achievements that the young people have made and these are celebrated within the home, especially when the young people and staff sit and eat a meal together. Staff have used photographs to encourage and demonstrate the achievements that young people have made. This also encourages positive discussions and collective memories that are then reinforced in the discussions that young people have with their peers and with other important people in their lives. Staff have also encouraged support for young people from others who have or have had similar experiences. For example, previous residents have been asked by social workers to become mentors for other young people and a regular football match between young people and young people in other homes has encouraged mutual support and guidance. Young people, therefore, make exceptional progress in all aspects of their lives.

The home provides a varied experience in relation to their culture, background and personal identity. For example, the home are encouraging of young people's rights to know of their past and heritage and support them through difficult issues relating to this aspect of their lives. Young people are also able to show their identity through

their clothing and food within the home in both daily living and care planning. This helps young people feel comfortable and come to terms with their identity and feel valued for who they are.

The home is appropriately located in a quiet village street. The staff and young people have successfully developed positive relationships with neighbours. Young people feel safe and accepted by the local community. The home is appropriately designed and maintained and staff have worked hard to give a homely feel to the provision.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people at the home are safe and feel safe. This is confirmed by young people who state that they, 'know that they could go to any member of staff who would help them.' Young people are protected from significant harm, including neglect, abuse, exploitation and accident. For example, young people are protected when using the internet. The staff are alert to issues of safety and act protectively to ensure that young people are not sexually exploited. Staff are very knowledgeable about the concerns regarding abuse. Staff understand and initiate child protection procedures, when necessary, to ensure the continuing safety of young people.

The home has a proactive and robust response to young people who go missing and towards incidents of bullying. Young people do go missing; however, when they do, they return quickly. There has been a recent reduction in the episodes of young people going missing from the home. Young people who do go missing are protected as far as possible and responded to positively on their return. The home does not tolerate bullying and has clear procedures regarding this issue. Young people have confidence in the staff and their ability to work with the bully and with the victim of bullying to resolve and stop any harmful behaviour.

Physical restraint has not been used in the home since the last inspection. The home has clear policies in relation to restraint. The home uses a wide range of effective behaviour management techniques and the young people respond with positive behaviour. Staff are knowledgeable about the individual needs of young people and how they can encourage good behaviour. This provides an ethos within the home where positive behaviour is expected; young people receive respect from staff and, therefore, the young people respect others.

The home provides good-quality staff. The home has competent procedures for vetting and monitoring staff. Staff have good quality and regular supervision. There is a good, varied staff team that provides a wide range of experience and expertise. For example, some staff have good-quality skills in providing a warm and homely listening ear whereas others have skills in providing an active but unobtrusive time in which to listen to young people. This gives an individual approach and so enables young people to choose how to discuss issues, therefore ensuring that their needs

are met. There have been no investigations into allegations or suspicions of harm made against staff; however, the home has a robust procedure for dealing with allegations that is fair, quick and consistent.

The home provides a physically-safe and appropriately-secure environment for young people. The home ensures that all utility checks are completed in a timely manner and fire safety is given appropriate priority. Carpets on the stairs and on the ground floor are stained from use but are not unsafe. Generally the home is clean and tidy.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively and efficiently managed. There is evidence of effective improvement in the abilities and qualities of the staff, safety and outcomes for young people and the quality of recording and planning. The provider meets the aims and objectives in the Statement of Purpose, and young people, staff and placing authorities are clear about the aims of the home and the services it provides.

The home provides good training for staff and training includes first aid, physical intervention, child protection and health and safety. The staff report that the training is effective and enables them to meet the needs of young people. However, staff raised concerns that the e-learning training is not challenging for the more able staff and more interactive types of learning provide staff with the benefit of learning from peers. This has minimal impact on young people. There are sufficient numbers of staff for young people. The staff state that they are well supported and have good-quality and challenging supervision to enable them to carry out their roles and improve their practice.

The home actively and regularly monitors the quality of care provided for young people. The reports provided by the home are detailed and are of good quality. However, some monitoring is not utilised and analysed to develop the home even further. The home has a development plan which is in the process of construction. The management team is motivated to examine and makes effective improvements to the home.

The home has effective policies and procedures in place. There are good-quality policies and procedures in relation to young person's admissions and independence programmes. The home makes good use of risk assessments, key working sessions and care plans for young people. Care plans and risk assessments are detailed and updated on a regular basis, especially during staff supervision. The staff have extensive knowledge of the young people they work with and put this to good use on a daily basis.

The home ensures that all significant events relating to the protection of young people are notified by the registered person to the appropriate authority. For example, the Registered Manager notified parents, social workers and other authorities regarding incidents of young people going missing. These events are

handled in a competent and efficient manner and took into account the needs of all young people in the home at the time. The Registered Manager can demonstrate how the lives of young people have improved over time. For example, young people that were resident at the home have visited and can give feedback regarding the quality of the care provided by the home. This ensures that the Registered Manager reviews and improves the quality of care provided to young people.

The home is adequately resourced and there is evidence of improvements in the physical structure of the home on a regular basis.

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.