

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC367551
Inspection date	17/07/2012
Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	06/03/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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 service is a children's home that is registered to care for three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is managed by a limited 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 **good**.

Children and young people receive a good level of care from a committed and skilled staff team. Care and support provided is based on individualised assessed needs and staff have high aspirations for children and young people. Staff work hard to enable children and young people to reach their full potential.

Children and young people have very good relationships with staff that help them to feel safe at the home. Furthermore, these relationships help children and young people to make improvements to their behaviour, helping to increase their self-esteem and confidence.

Staff are provided with good support from the management team and are provided with a range of training. This helps them meet the needs of children and young people. Comments received from social workers and independent reviewing officers were very positive about the staff team and include: 'they are extremely accommodating'; 'they are always looking for resolutions and are imaginative in trying to find resolutions'.

There are five recommendations made for areas for improvement. These relate to: the recording of restraints; the home's complaints procedure; involving children and young people in care planning; ensuring the home is always secure and the monthly consultation forms given to children and young people.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure records of restraint give clear details of the actual type of intervention used (NMS 3.14)
- ensure the home is kept secure at all times by keeping external doors closed (NMS 10)
- review the monthly consultation forms given to children (NMS 21.1)
- ensure the handling of complaints is in line with the home's complaints procedure, with reference to providing written feedback about the outcome of the investigation to the complainant (NMS 21.10)
- ensure children understand, within their level of understanding, the purpose and content of their placement plan and the reasoning behind any decisions about their care. Involve children in producing and reviewing their placement plans. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Children and young people become more confident and their self-esteem improves during their time at the home. They learn how to interact socially with their peers and adults which helps them prepare for adulthood. This also enables them to take an active part in the wider community which in turn gives them access to a wider range of leisure and social activities. One independent reviewing officer commented on the good progress one young person has made in developing their social interaction skills.

Children and young people feel safe and secure at the home due to the supportive and nurturing positive relationships that exist with staff. This enables them to raise any concerns they may have. Young people feel valued and respected by staff which helps to increase their self-esteem.

Children and young people receive excellent practical and emotional support to maintain contact and develop relationships with their families. This has enabled children and young people to make good progress with relationships that are important to them. In some cases, progress made by some children and young people has enabled them to work towards returning to live with their families. The commitment of staff to ensure children and young people have contact with significant people in their lives is also reflected in the practical support they give to social workers and independent reviewing officers; when one child's social worker and independent reviewing officer visit, staff collect them from the airport.

Children and young people make good progress in changing their poor and, in some cases, risk taking behaviours. This helps to protect children and young people from the risk of harm and abuse while at the same time increasing their social skills and confidence. The facilities and design of the home has given children and young people the space to improve their behaviours so as not to affect others living in the home. For example, the conservatory tends to be used by the older children with the main lounge being used by the younger children. However, with improved behaviours children and young people are now able to interact socially together and have become more tolerant of each other.

Children and young people benefit from healthy lifestyles. For some children and young people their lifestyles have improved tremendously as they have stopped engaging in risky behaviour which affects their health such as alcohol use. This can be attributed to the practical and emotional support given by staff.

Quality of care

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

Children and young people's views are central to the running of the home. Systems within the home empower children and young people to make decisions about the day-to-day running of the home and decisions which affect their future lives. Consequently, children and young people feel valued and listened to. For example, children and young people asked to have their bedrooms decorated; this has taken place with them choosing the colour schemes. Since the last inspection an independent advocacy service has also been made available for children and young people to use should they wish. Children and young people are also actively supported by staff to contact their local authority advocates when they need to. This not only gives children and young people other people to talk to but also helps to protect them from the risk of harm and abuse.

Children and young people receive a good quality of care which takes into account their cultural background and personal identity including their age, gender, religion, ethnicity, communication needs and their sexual orientation. This is possible due to very good care plans, risk assessments and associated records which give clear details of the needs of children and young people and how to meet their needs. Records are regularly reviewed to ensure they reflect children and young people's current needs. Although children and young people read and sign their care plans, they are not currently proactively involved in producing them.

Individualised care and the promotion of equality and diversity is embedded in the day-to-day practice at the home. Staff work hard to ensure children and young people are able to develop and retain their individual identity; they are also supported to learn about their own culture and heritage. Children and young people have a range of opportunities where they learn about other cultures and religions. This helps young people understand and accept difference.

Staff are proactive in accessing appropriate health services based on the individual

needs of children and young people. As a result, children and young people benefit from improved physical and emotional health during their time at the home. They receive both practical support in attending health appointments as well as emotional support. Staff work very closely with other health professionals including therapeutic services which help children and young people understand their backgrounds and histories. Furthermore, this therapeutic support helps children and young people make progress in their emotional development and it helps them change their unacceptable behaviours.

Education is seen as important at the home and staff are committed to promoting educational achievement. Staff are proactive in working closely with placing authorities and education provisions to provide education based on individual needs; they try and find ways of encouraging children and young people to engage in education. As a result, some children and young people's attendance at educational provisions improves and is good, given their starting points. This not only helps to promote their academic achievement but also increases their social skills. One social worker commented about how well the staff had worked with the school which has not only maintained the child in school but improved their attendance. However, this is not the case for all children and young people. The attendance at school of some children and young people is poor despite the efforts of staff to encourage them. In such cases children and young people have been provided with additional tuition at home to try to improve their chances of fulfilling their academic potential.

There is very good communication with young people's families, social workers and independent reviewing officers. This is mostly confirmed by feedback from social workers and independent reviewing officers. Weekly and monthly reports produced by the home are sent to young people's social workers and independent reviewing officers. This helps relevant professionals monitor young people's progress and to ensure they are receiving care in line with their agreed placement plans.

Children and young people live in a home which is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. Facilities take into account the individualised needs such as age and gender of children and young people as well as group needs. This has ensured that all children and young people have their own space and can access age appropriate programmes and activities. Children and young people have their own bedrooms, some of which are en-suite. They are encouraged to personalise their rooms to reflect their individual personalities and identities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Children and young people say they feel safe living at the home and bullying is not an issue. This can be attributed to the effective implementation by staff of a range of safeguarding policies and procedures including child protection; behaviour management; missing from care; anti-bullying and health and safety. Children and young people are able to take controlled risks based on their previous experiences, abilities and understanding in a safe and nurturing environment. High staffing levels

and the existence of open and trusting relationships between staff and children and young people further protect and promote children and young people's well-being. Close working and regular communication with placing authorities also helps to monitor the care and safety provided to children and young people.

The management of behaviour is good and children and young people make real progress during their time at the home. Emphasis is placed on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour which helps children and young people feel valued and learn how to change their behaviours. As children and young people settle in the home the number of restraints and sanctions used reduces and the number of rewards increases. This can be attributed to the skills and commitment of the staff team who work hard with children and young people and other professionals to help children and young people change their behaviours. One social worker commented that they were very impressed with the way the staff team work with the therapy manager to help children and young people change their behaviours and with their emotional development. Records of all incidents of unacceptable behaviour are kept which includes incident report forms; records of restraint; records of rewards and sanctions. However, some terminology used in the recording of incidents including the use of restraint does not give the reader a clear picture of the type of restraint and intervention used. This has the potential to affect the Registered Manager's ability to accurately assess if the type of intervention is appropriate and safe.

Procedures and practices relating to children and young people going missing are robust and help to further protect young people from the risk of harm. Individual protocols are in place for staff to follow in the event of a young person going missing. Incidents of children and young people going missing necessitating being reporting to the police are low.

The management of health and safety is good and helps keep children, young people and staff safe. However, during the inspection it was noticed that the front door had been left wide open when staff and a young person went out. The home was not secure for a short while and potentially placed children, young people, and staff at risk.

Safe, robust and effective recruitment practices and the vetting of visitors help to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse.

Leadership and management

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

The home has a very detailed and comprehensive Statement of Purpose in place. This informs children, young people, parents, carers and placing authorities about what to expect. Practice in the home is in line with the Statement of Purpose.

Since the last inspection a new Registered Manager has been appointed. The Registered Manager, who also manages another home run by the company, has made a number of improvements. The staff team have welcomed some of the

changes implemented by the Registered Manager which they report have improved the quality of care for children and young people. These changes include the introduction of a co-key worker system which promotes shared ownership within the staff team. Communication within the staff team has also improved and has ensured a more consistent level of care and children and young people being clear about the boundaries.

The home demonstrates its continued commitment and capacity to improve the quality of life for children and young people. At the last inspection, the Registered Manager was asked to provide a telephone which could be easily accessed by children and young people. A telephone is now available in the conservatory which ensures children and young people can make and receive phone calls without asking staff. Two recommendations were also made about the provision of an independent advocate and staffing which have been addressed.

The home has a development plan which gives clear details of the targets and timescales for the year and is reviewed at the end of each timescale. The development plan has recently been discussed with children and young people and the staff team. This demonstrates a willingness and commitment from the Registered Manager to involve children, young people and the staff team in order to improve the quality of care for young people.

There have been a number of changes in the staff team since the last inspection which has had a positive impact on the provision of care for children and young people. Additional staff have been recruited to ensure individualised needs are met. Consequently, this has reduced the number of different staff working at the home resulting in improved and consistent care for children and young people. Staffing levels are based on the individual needs of children and young people and there is flexibility to increase staffing should the need arise.

Staff find the management team approachable and they feel valued. Staff are very well supported by the management team and receive regular supervision which they appreciate. Staff training and development is seen as important. In addition to providing mandatory training, there is a real commitment by the company to provide training which enables staff to meet the diverse needs of young people.

There is a range internal quality assurance systems which help to ensure children and young people receive care and support based on their individual needs and that care is being provided in a safe manner. These systems are further complemented by the monthly visits carried out by a representative from the company. Children and young people are involved in the monitoring of their care and the running of the home which gives them a voice and helps them feel valued. For example, monthly consultation forms are given to children and young people to comment on the care they receive and make suggestions for improvements. However, these forms are not in a child friendly format and so some children and young people may need staff to support them in completing the forms. Furthermore, these forms are not always productive in obtaining children and young people's views and suggestions and effectively have become a 'tick box' exercise for most children and young people.

The home has a clear procedure for dealing with complaints which is also included in the home's Statement of Purpose. One formal complaint has been made since the last inspection. Records show that this was dealt with promptly and resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant. However, the home's procedures were not fully followed. A letter of acknowledgement of the receipt of the complaint was not sent to the complainant and the complainant was not informed in writing about the outcome of the investigation. There is no evidence that this shortfall has had any impact on children and young people.

The system for notifying relevant authorities about significant events has been improved since the appointment of the Registered Manager. He has introduced a system to ensure he is made aware of all incidents and significant events immediately. Staff send the forms to him electronically if he is not at the home. This helps to ensure all appropriate agencies are notified about all incidents in a timely manner; this helps to protect children and young people from the risk of harm and abuse.

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.