

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC033502
Inspection date	12/07/2012
Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	08/02/2012
--------------------------------	------------

© 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

This children's home is run by a local authority. It provides care and accommodation for up to seven young people who have experienced emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

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 are well cared for by a consistent and committed team of staff and they make good progress in all areas. Care is tailored to the specific requirements of the individual young person so their assessed needs are met. Young people develop their social skills and their confidence and sense of self- worth increases. They make very good progress with their education from their starting point on admission to the home because they attend school or college very regularly. Their health needs are well met and they are fully supported to develop life skills to prepare them for future independence.

Safe care practices ensure that young people are properly protected. Young people themselves say that they feel very safe and are well looked after. Professionals involved with the service confirm that young people are safe and well cared for in this home. One social worker commented, 'Young people are definitely safe here' and another social worker said, 'Staff are concerned about young people and they want them to do well.'

The home is managed effectively and is well organised in order to ensure that young people achieve good outcomes. Staff are qualified and ongoing training supports them in their work with young people. Robust monitoring arrangements ensure that there is good oversight of the work of the home and that shortfalls are addressed. This ensures that the home continues to develop.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection. These relate to

ensuring that all young people clearly understand the detail of their day-to-day care plans and to some information that is missing in the young person's guide.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the young person's guide contains details of how they can contact their Independent Reviewing Officer (NMS 13.5)
- ensure all young people understand the full detail of their individual placement plan. (NMS 25.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Young people benefit from settled placements in this home and as a consequence they make good progress over time. They are supported to understand about their history and background through meaningful contact with their family and regular key work sessions. They develop positive, trusting relationships with staff and as a result they gain confidence and develop self-esteem.

Young people are fully supported to develop a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. They report that they are given advice about health matters, eat healthily and are encouraged to exercise regularly to promote their health. Their physical and emotional health needs are identified and resources made available to ensure that they are met. The home has established very effective links with health agencies such as psychology services and substance misuse teams and the looked after children nurse visits the home regularly. These arrangements ensure that young people benefit from access to additional services when a need is identified. Some young people's health has improved as a result of living in the home because they have been able to have access to primary health care services for the first time. This has enabled them to have treatment to improve their health outcomes. With the full support and encouragement of staff, other young people have been able to stop smoking. This has also had a beneficial impact on their health. There are good systems for the storage and administration of medication. These protect young people and support their health.

All young people have an identified education placement that is appropriate for their needs and that they attend very regularly. This ensures that they have the opportunity to learn and achieve. Social workers and teaching staff report that young people's engagement with education and their level of attainment has greatly improved from the time they come into the home. Most young people have aspirations for their future which include further education and training.

Young people are supported to try different activities in order to help them to develop their social skills and talents as well as friendships in the community. For example, some young people have attended the local youth club and a young person has been part of a drama group. Activities that always prove popular with young people and that they do regularly, include swimming and playing football.

Staff consult regularly with young people about their individual care plans and about the routines of the home. This enables young people to be involved in the decisions that are made about their life. Young people say that they can talk to staff and that they feel their views are listened to. One professional commented that as a result of the support given by staff, one young person had begun to take part in reviews for the first time, which has been of great benefit.

Young people are supported to develop skills for future independence at a pace that is appropriate to their age and needs. For example, from the time they come to live in the home, they are encouraged to keep their own rooms clean and tidy and to do their laundry, with the guidance and support of staff. As they grow older, they can progress to managing a weekly budget for shopping and cooking. Young people who are of an appropriate age have a pathway plan that care staff have contributed to fully. They are confident that they are learning how to take care of themselves. Care staff report that young people often keep in touch with them after they leave the home. This demonstrates that young people have developed positive relationships with staff that continue after they leave care.

Quality of care

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

Young people say that they feel they are well cared for and that they like living in the home. One young person said, 'It's good here. I'm looked after' and another young person said that they 'feel better for living here.' They enjoy warm, positive relationships with staff which enables them to feel settled in their home.

Professionals involved with the home make positive comments about the way young people are looked after. For example, one social worker said, 'When I have visited, I have seen a nurturing and warm environment and feel that staff show that they care' and another commented, 'This is an excellent home.'

Staff have established very good links with other agencies such as health services, youth offending teams and the police in order to ensure that young people have the services and support they need to promote their well-being and safety.

Detailed individual plans are developed for young people, based on their overall care plan. These are underpinned by equally detailed risk assessments and behaviour support plans. Plans ensure that there is consistency of care and that young people's assessed needs are met. All plans are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect young people's changing needs and the progress that they make. Young people said that they know that they have a care plan and that staff talk to them

about their care in the home. However, they were not all clear about the detail of their written day-to-day care plans. Social workers report that care staff contribute fully to the care planning and reviewing process and support young people to engage in their reviews.

There are frequent opportunities for young people to make their views known. These include regular key work sessions and residents' meetings. These arrangements enable young people to be fully involved in discussions about their own future and about the life of the home. Young people say that they feel able to talk to staff. They report that they know how to complain and say that staff 'sort things out'.

Care staff have a very positive view of the value of education and work hard to ensure that young people attend their education provision regularly so that they can achieve and improve their life chances. This is recognised by professionals involved with the home who say that staff 'have worked extremely well with young people' to support their education. Staff maintain close liaison with schools and other education providers to ensure consistency of approach and they attend all education meetings and school events. They work hard to ensure that all young people have an education provision that is appropriate to their individual needs. This has resulted in some young people being able to change placements to a setting that better meets their needs. These young people then attend very regularly and make steady progress. Staff recognise and praise young people's achievements, which helps to encourage young people to continue to achieve. Staff also encourage young people to make plans for further education and training as part of their preparation for independence.

Young people benefit from living in a homely, well maintained and safe environment. The home provides young people with sufficient space to enable them to spend time alone or in groups. It is comfortably furnished and young people have access to equipment that they enjoy using in their leisure time, such as pool and table tennis tables and electronic games. There is a small football pitch on site that young people use very regularly with staff. Young people report that they can personalise their rooms and say that they like the house. The home is in a suitable location and young people are able to have easy access to public transport and local facilities.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home's safeguarding arrangements are robust and effective. Staff training in child protection issues is kept up to date so they know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. They have a good knowledge of the home's safeguarding procedure. This means that child protection concerns are responded to promptly and managed effectively in order to protect young people. Young people themselves say that they feel very safe in the home and they also say that staff give them advice about safety outside the home. They comment that they feel able to talk to staff and they would let them know if they had a concern. Young people also report that there is no bullying and that they think young people 'usually get on okay'. This contributes

to their feeling of safety and well-being in the home.

Care staff understand the specific vulnerabilities of the young people they look after. They develop detailed risk assessments and plans for young people that identify the strategies they employ to keep young people safe. They work closely with partner agencies, such as the police and social workers to promote young people's safety and welfare. Because of the work that is done with young people by care staff and partner agencies, unsafe behaviour such as offending and drug taking has been reduced overall and for some young people has been eliminated. Professionals involved with the home confirm that they feel young people are 'very safe' in the home.

Young people very rarely go missing from the home. There are detailed risk assessments that identify the likelihood of this happening and the actions staff should take to keep young people safe. Staff follow the locally agreed multi-agency protocol if a young person does go missing in order to support their safe return to the home.

Staff help young people to learn to behave in ways that are socially acceptable and young people respond well. The positive way staff work with young people very much reduces the need for physical intervention or restraint in order to keep them and staff safe. This in turn has a positive impact on young people's sense of safety and self-worth.

Young people benefit from living in a home that is kept safe and free from hazards. This is achieved by routine health and safety checks and regular servicing of all equipment. Young people take part in fire evacuation drills and know how to leave the home safely in an emergency.

The home's robust staff recruitment practices are effective in protecting young people from unsuitable individuals because they ensure that all staff are thoroughly vetted before they start work. The arrangements for checking visitors before they are allowed into the home also contribute to protecting young people.

Leadership and management

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

The home is managed effectively in order to provide a good standard of care to young people. The registered manager is qualified and very experienced in working with children and young people and managing children's homes. Staff report that they feel they are well supported by their managers. They have regular supervision which enables them to discuss their individual training and development needs. There are also regular team meetings and detailed handovers at the start of each shift. These arrangements enable them to discuss their care of young people and the general running of the home.

Care staff are qualified and experienced and they have access to regular training in

order to maintain their knowledge and skills. They are committed and enthusiastic about their work with young people and have a very good knowledge of their individual needs. They report that they work together very well and say that this enables them to be consistent in their care of young people. This consistency benefits young people emotionally and supports their progress.

The arrangements for staffing are managed effectively to ensure that there are sufficient staff on duty at all times. This means that young people are appropriately supervised and well cared for. Young people say that they know all the staff who work with them and that there is always someone there to support them. This enables them to feel safe and settled in their home.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide to the service give young people, their families and professionals clear written information about the home. This enables them to see how young people are looked after. The young person's guide gives young people good information about their rights in care, but does not contain the contact details of their Independent Reviewing Officer to enable them to make direct contact with this person if they wish. Both documents are regularly reviewed to make sure that the information they contain remains accurate and reflects the way the home works.

There are sound arrangements for monitoring the quality of care in the home. These ensure that good standards are maintained for young people. Checks include monthly unannounced visits from an independent person as well as those undertaken by the manager. The views of young people are regularly sought as part of this process. This enables them to influence the running of the service. The manager takes prompt action to address any shortfalls that are identified during inspections or as part of the home's own monitoring, in order to improve the quality of the service that is given to young people. There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection but the home has a good history of responding positively to issues raised in previous inspections. There is a detailed plan for the future development of the home that has achievable goals and objectives for the continued improvement of the service.

Information that is held about young people is kept up to date and in good order so that it is accessible to them. Files are mainly electronic, but some paper records are kept. All relevant records are cross referenced appropriately into young people's individual files, so that they have access to a clear history of their time in the home. Young people are encouraged to read and contribute to their files so that they know what is written about them and so that their views are reflected in their records. All information is stored securely to protect young people's right to confidentiality.

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.