Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC448997
Inspection date	02/10/2013
Inspector	Sophie Wood
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	29/11/2012

Service information

Brief description of the service

This privately owned children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for a maximum of 2 young people with emotional and 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 thriving in an environment which effectively promotes all aspects of their social, emotional, educational and behavioural development. Highly personalised care plans ensure that areas of need and support are prioritised and this maximises young people's chances of success.

The current young people have enjoyed the stability of living in this home since its opening. They are now excitedly preparing for the next stages of their lives, in accordance with their original plans. Their personal growth is evident through good quality record- keeping and this demonstrates significant reductions in challenging and unsafe behaviours.

Young people are not going missing. They are also making healthy decisions, engaging in full-time education and sustaining improved relationships with their family members and the staff team. Self-esteem levels are on the increase. Young people are developing a can do mentality and they confidently contribute their views and opinions about the quality of the care they receive.

Senior managers are continuing to develop robust monitoring and quality assurance systems. Some areas of care planning have improved as a direct result. Organisational development plans are challenging yet realistic. However, such monitoring does not capture all shortfalls. A requirement is made to ensure the use of physical restraint is recorded in full compliance with the Regulation. Recommendations are made with regards to the quality and rigour of Regulation 33 processes, young people's reluctance to cooperate with fire drills and the need to

record information in ways which will make sense to young people should they view their records in the future.

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 of which shall include- (a) to (i). Regulation 17B (3) (a)-(i)	15/11/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that visits of the carried out under Regulation 33 include relevant checks set out in regulations and guidance and checks of any disciplinary measures and use of restraint and records of missing person's reports (NMS 21.7)
- ensure that all children and staff are familiar with and have practised the emergency escape plan so they know what to do in an emergency (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that information recorded about the child is recorded clearly and in a way which will be helpful to the child when they access their files now or in the future. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

Young people make good, and in some cases, exceptionally good progress in this home. Confidence levels soar through young people being given opportunities to succeed. They say, 'I've turned myself around' and 'it's all down to my own hard work.' Staff members concur with such statements. They say, 'seeing (child's name) about to move on confidently is the biggest reward we could ask for' and 'it won't be the same without (child's name) here but to see such hunger for independence is what we are all about.'

New young people often struggle to develop meaningful relationships with staff

members. Attachment difficulties are keenly pursued. Life story work, extensive key worker input and exploring past events encourages young people to make sense of their own personal histories. They are beginning to develop better coping mechanisms. Relationships with key staff members are becoming more trusting as a result. Young people say, 'sometimes their care annoys me…I don't need their help….but at other times it's nice to know they care about me.' Young people are learning to place trust and investment in the adults around them.

Young people are taking greater responsibility for their own well being. Some young people are actively owning their own health needs; making appointments, challenging decisions and making informed choices about their own involvement with specialist services. Young people feel empowered. They are making appropriate choices and decisions about their current and on-going health needs.

Young people are extending this growth in maturity to other aspects of their lives. The cessation of using alcohol and drugs has come from young people themselves. Those with a history of being missing are now occasionally late home, albeit with a text or call to explain why. Young people who joined the home with conviction histories are now free from the repercussions of this because they have elected to refrain from such activities and focus upon a brighter future. Such change is inspirational.

All of the young people are fully engaged with meaningful further education programmes. They know exactly what they wish to do in the future and they are committed to pursuing their chosen career paths. All of the young people demonstrate self-motivation, are engaged in full time college courses and are achieving 100% attendance. Their chances of a successful future are significantly increased from when they first moved into the home.

Young people enjoy regular and appropriate contact arrangements with their family members and friends. Such arrangements are supported where necessary. However, young people are also taking appropriate control of how and when they wish to spend their free time. Learning to choose relationships and to take control of these, in a healthy and safe way, is an area of development in which young people are thriving.

The home is specifically clear in its desire to promote independence. To this end, only young people over the age of 14 are offered a placement. Current young people are working hard to develop self-care skills and the emotional resilience they need to make a successful transition into semi-independent living arrangements. All of the young people are eagerly anticipating this next stage because individually tailored care packages accurately pinpoint the areas requiring the most targeted support. Young people are confident they will be ready.

Quality of care

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

The young people in the home do not particularly like each other. They have very different interests and no desire to spend time together. The staff team has seized this opportunity to demonstrate tolerance and acceptance with the young people. Their own personal circumstances are positively used to illustrate the importance of living and working alongside others whom they may not like or wish to spend time with. This is reinforced to young people as a very important and necessary part of growing up.

Staff skilfully implement their training in this regard. Being conversant with topics including countering bullying, attachment, equality and diversity and separation and loss enables staff to recognise and understand young people's feelings and behaviours. This factor reliably informs good quality care planning and delivery. Young people learn to understand their own needs and behaviours and in turn become more tolerant of others.

Good quality care plans accurately capture the requests of placing authority social workers. Their comments include, 'the home is delivering exactly what my young person needs' and '(name of young person) is about to move on, very positively and absolutely ready.' Young people are integral to this process. They present themselves confidently at review meetings and make frequent written comments on documents about their care.

The home places great focus upon pathway planning and moving to independence. Recent changes to its own care planning format has improved the quality of such documentation. This recent update also incorporates the views and opinions of young people and placing social workers. Risk assessments and behaviour management plans give clear guidance for staff to follow. Targets and goals are understood by all and individual guidance precisely describes identity needs, including how these are to be supported in day-to-day care delivery.

An excellent example of innovative practice is the home's development of a mobile phone application. This is downloaded onto young people's phones and a menu takes them to various helpful sites and links. Topics include budgeting skills, meals for a fiver, public transport timetables, health clinics and education providers. The home is commended for such versatile thinking which increases the likelihood of young people looking up such useful information.

Health care plans are detailed and clear. Where applicable, these detail very strong links with external health professionals. Hence, agreed plans are diligently followed and monitored. Young people also benefit from taking increased responsibility for their own health needs. Examples include, making their own health appointments and informed decisions as to the need and use of prescribed medicines.

Young people do not always agree with decisions about their care. They make appropriate use of complaint's procedures and the forums available to discuss wider issues about the daily operation of the home. Young people are listened to. They do not always agree with immediate decisions made by the staff and they do not always use the processes available to them. However, they do confirm that such processes

work in practice. They generally prefer to simply speak with a trusted staff member and say, 'if something is really bothering me then I just tell someone.'

Young people are taking full advantage of the educational opportunities available to them. The home is not a registered school provider but it does offer a wide range of complementary educational support. Bespoke packages include private tuition and weekly activity planners steeped in broadening young people's knowledge and experiences. The home has links with local schools and colleges; staff know who and where the providers are. All of the young people are enjoying full-time college attendance and have very clear ideas about their future career plans.

Young people are living in a comfortable, well maintained home. Its location lends itself to all forms of public transport which ideally suits the independence of the young people. Bedrooms are highly personalised and privacy is assured. Good quality décor, furniture and fittings provides a homely and welcoming feel.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Young people say they feel safe in the home. Staff are well versed with safeguarding procedures and they continue to receive regular updated training from an external source. Incidents leading to child protection referrals and consultations are minimal. These are swiftly reported and the home works in close partnership with local authorities and the police in the best interests of protecting the young people.

The risk taking behaviours of young people have significantly decreased over time. Young people are making positive, safe choices. Risk assessments have further developed and these enable young people to take appropriate, balanced risks which aid their development as they learn to keep themselves safe. Young people are choosing to come home at agreed times, they no longer go missing and they maintain appropriate levels of contact with the staff while out.

Staff recognise the particular vulnerabilities of individual young people. Risk assessments highlight these areas. Good use of key worker time gives young people the opportunity to talk these through and obtain the guidance and support they need. The home enjoys a positive relationship with the police. Sensitive information is appropriately shared and the home is signed up to local authority and police protocols with regards to missing person procedures.

Incidents of young people demonstrating challenging and dangerous behaviours have dramatically decreased. Clear behaviour management strategies, including the use of physical restraint are in place, albeit rarely used. Such guidelines continue to be regularly reviewed. Staff are suitably trained in the use of physical restraint techniques. Such interventions are accurately recorded, however the section detailing staff de-briefing is currently held in a separate log book. This is in contrast to the regulation and a requirement is made to address this and keep the whole record in one dedicated volume.

Young people describe the home's behaviour management processes as usually fair and reasonable. There are occasions where young people say they feel over-protected. Such comments fit with their current drive and desire for independence. However, staff continue to insist on certain rules and expectations, in line with good parenting and commensurate with each young person's age and understanding. The use of sanctions is infrequent and appropriate.

Since the last inspection one omission occurred with regards to the home's recruitment practice. This was followed up at the time and the home took appropriate remedial action. The home's current practice is robust. New staff do not commence with their employment until all required vetting procedures have been undertaken. Young people are further protected through the diligent supervision of visitors to the home. No agency staff or volunteers are used.

The home provides young people with a safe and appropriately secure physical environment. Health and safety checks are routinely conducted. This practice results in swift maintenance action, where necessary. Fire safety processes are equally diligent. However, young people have recently refused to engage in fire drills and this potentially places them at risk in the event of a real fire.

Leadership and management

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

The home is effectively led by a dynamic and creative Registered Manager. Her inclusive and decisive management style motivates the team. Staff speak of 'excellent support, clear direction and cohesive team work. The majority of team members possess the qualifications required for their roles and responsibilities. Some, including the Registered Manager are studying for higher qualifications and newer staff are completing necessary Diplomas, National Vocational Qualifications and the Children's Workforce Development Council induction standards.

The presenting needs of the young people directly influences additional supplementary staff training. Recent courses specifically target the individual and unique needs of those in placement. Staff say, 'the mandatory courses are good but it's the additional training that develops my practice.' Staff are highly motivated to improve their own performance. This is demonstrated through the supervision and appraisal process which sees challenging targets being set through staff personal development plans. As a result, young people are benefitting from well planned care which is being competently delivered.

Placing authorities, parents, carers and young people understand the aims and objectives of the home. These are clearly explained through an informative Statement of Purpose, young person's guide and website. Social workers confirm, 'the home delivers.'

Four complaints have been received since the last inspection; three of these were

anonymous. The home works openly and transparently with Ofsted and these complaints have been satisfactorily explored. The Registered Manager makes timely notifications to Ofsted and placing authorities. Information is relevant, detailed and appropriate. This enables all agencies to share information and work together to effectively safeguard the young people.

One requirement and three recommendations were made from the last inspection. These were satisfactorily addressed at the time. However, further difficulties have since been experienced with regards to Regulation 33 processes and a different shortfall is identified at this inspection with regards to physical restraint records. The previous requirement and recommendation is therefore repeated, albeit for different reasons.

Records pertaining to the care, support and plans for the young people are generally in good order. They are safely and securely stored. Key worker reports and review preparation notes demonstrate the good, and exceptionally good progress that young people have made since joining the home. There are occasions however, where the information held is potentially overwhelming. This could present difficulties for young people later on in wanting to view their records to make sense of their time at the home.

The Responsible Individual values an external view of the quality of the service and uses an independent company to conduct Regulation 33 visits. Recent difficulties include changes to the personnel of this organisation and inconsistencies in the timings of such visits. The overall quality of these reports has become variable with less focus upon evaluation. More positively, the Registered Manager's own Regulation 34 monitoring has improved. These reports contain more detailed evaluation about quality and this aspect reliably informs the home's own development plans. The subsequent impact upon staff training and innovative developments in providing information for young people is very positive.

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* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.