

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC020133
Inspection date	20/11/2013
Inspector	Philip Cass
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	23/01/2013
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to eight young people with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It provides short-term crisis placements. The home is owned by a private company. Education is provided 365 days a year, both on site and through camps and outdoor activities.

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 **outstanding**.

This service delivers short-term programmes of care that address significant risk-taking and offending behaviours. Young people make great progress at school. Other outcomes are exceptional because dangerous and damaging behaviours stop. This means that young people are safe. Because the behaviours of young people are stabilised, suitable long term placements can be identified. Young people are able to look forward positively to future success because they address the factors that led to their placement in the home. A social worker has encouraged the home to 'keep up the amazing work'.

Young people take part in an excellent range of stimulating activity, focussed on outdoor pursuits. This means that they are able to establish healthy routines that enable them to use their time constructively. Positive engagement in activities enables young people to experience success. Consequently, they grow in self-esteem and self-confidence. Their sense of well-being is further promoted by the trusting and supportive relationships enjoyed with staff. Staff are excellent communicators. Young people reflect very positively on the care provided by the home. A young person says that staff are 'the best'.

The management of the home is of a very high standard. Quality assurance systems are challenging and promote improvement. The management team set very high expectations for the young people and the staff. High quality development plans evidence the manager's ambition to further develop the home and maximise the

progress made by young people. It is recommended that the home arrange specific training in relation to working with young people who have gang affiliations.

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 staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the children. This specifically refers to training regarding children who have gang affiliations. (NMS 18.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

The home offers a highly effective response to the specific needs of young people in crisis. Young people quickly stop offending and risk taking behaviours. Because behaviours are controlled, young people are provided with a positive environment in which to address previous traumatic life experiences. A parent has commented that young people's progress is 'absolutely amazing'.

Young people are placed at the home with significant history of educational failure. The home adopts creative strategies that enable young people to overcome negative attitudes to education. They begin to enjoy and look forward to school. Consequently, young people have excellent school attendance. Incidents of unauthorised absence are eliminated, even for young people who have poor educational attendance at the time of placement. The educational achievement of young people is satisfactory but they make exceptional progress from their starting point at the time of admission.

The home supports young people to use their time in a positive way. Daily routines become less chaotic as young people learn the value of healthy patterns of sleep and activity. A young person commented that she feels better since arriving in the home because she is 'not tired'. Age appropriate routines improve the emotional health and well-being of young people. They ensure that behaviours are stabilised and that young people have a realistic prospect of longer term success.

The health of young people is promoted because they are discouraged from smoking and supported to make positive health choices. All young people who are admitted to the home with an addiction to nicotine are placed on a smoking cessation plan. This means that they smoke considerably fewer cigarettes and make progress towards giving up smoking during their placement. Young people are less exposed to negative influences. As a result, drug use is eliminated. The programme of outdoor pursuits means that young people develop improved fitness. Young people gain improved emotional health and greater emotional resilience because they access

therapy and counselling where appropriate.

Transition planning is strong and effective. As young people begin to make more positive decisions, they are rewarded with greater trust and freedom. The home is very strong in supporting young people to achieve the objectives of transition plans. As a result, young people are confident of success when they move to longer term placements. Young people make a very positive contribution to their community. Young people are active members of local sports clubs and community groups. Community involvement is further encouraged because the young people are actively involved in charitable fund raising. As well as raising money, recent events have increased young people's awareness of social and health issues.

Quality of care

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

When interacting with young people, staff demonstrate great empathy and kindness. They respond well to young people who are tactile, ensuring that they experience warmth and affection during their time in the home. The quality of relationships is described by young people as, 'like a proper family'. Staff are highly effective because compassion and understanding is combined with high expectation and high aspiration. As a result, young people become well mannered, learn to speak respectfully, and have improved social skills.

Each young person has a detailed and comprehensive care plan. This means that staff are provided with very clear guidance about how to meet the complex needs of young people. Keyworkers and managers carefully monitor progress towards meeting the objectives of the care plan. This enables the home to demonstrate very positive outcomes. Care planning identifies needs that stem from the young person's preferences, culture and background. Consequently, the home addresses equality and diversity well. Key working systems are used well to ensure that the views of young people are central to decisions about future placements. Managers are effective in challenging placing authorities if there are delays in sharing information. This means that staff are provided with up to date information and can tailor care plans appropriately.

The home is excellent at promoting school attendance. Because staff have a very good knowledge of the young people, they are able to motivate them and provide tailored incentives for attendance. Young people are supported to establish settled bed time and morning routines. These routines ensure that young people begin the school day in a positive frame of mind. Educational achievement is promoted because the home has very good links with the schools attended by young people. Very high levels of education support enable young people to do very well at school.

A wide range of enriching and stimulating activities is provided. Young people enjoy games and craft activities in the home. A wide range of books encourages young people to enjoy reading. The home is good at supporting young people from urban backgrounds to learn about nature. Young people reflect that they particularly enjoy

the opportunity to live in a rural area surrounded by animals. They also take part in community activities such as dance classes and swimming lessons. However, the focus of the home is outdoor pursuits and adventurous activities such as camping, hill walking, caving, mountain-biking and climbing. Activities are designed to allow young people to experience success and overcome challenges. This supports them to grow in self-esteem. Improved self-esteem enables young people to make positive lifestyle choices.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home ensures that each young person is carefully monitored and well supervised at all times. Staff intervene effectively to prevent damaging behaviours. Young people have a strong sense of safety because staff are so effective in promoting safe behaviours. Although young people do occasionally feel that the rules of the home are too strict, they understand that staff do all they can to keep them safe. Staff are very effective communicators. They take the time to fully explain their decisions. Very positive behaviour management strategies ensure that young people behave well. Incentive schemes are well understood by young people and further promote good behaviour. High levels of supervision also ensure that young people do not experience bullying.

Young people are often admitted to the home with entrenched patterns of running away from carers and placing themselves at considerable risk while missing. When young people settle into the home they stop running away. This means that they are considerably safer. A young person has written a list of the good things about the home that includes the fact that, 'I will not run away.' Key worker sessions are used very effectively to provide information to young people about safety. Because young people learn about e-safety, grooming, relationships, and substance misuse; they are able to make positive and informed choices.

The risk of abuse is significantly reduced because staff and managers have a comprehensive understanding of safeguarding procedures. Staff are committed to working in line with these procedures. Highly effective monitoring, reporting, training and inter-agency systems minimise the likelihood of harm to young people in the home. The home carefully follows safe recruitment procedures. These include criminal record checks and telephone verification of references. Consequently, the risk of the home appointing inappropriate adults to work with the young people is reduced.

The risk of accidental injury is reduced as a result of careful risk assessment. However, this risk assessment does not limit the ability of young people to take part in a range of stimulating activity. The Adventure Activities Licencing Service confirms that activities are provided in a 'safe and appropriate manner' by experienced and qualified instructors. There are good, and regularly tested, fire safety systems that minimise the risk of injury in the home. Periodic testing of heating and electrical

equipment further reduces the likelihood of harm.

Leadership and management

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

The experienced and highly competent registered manager is very well supported by her management team. When necessary, managers constructively challenge external agencies to improve the quality of services provided to young people. This means that the home acts as a very effective advocate. Good communication ensures that the needs and wishes of young people are understood by a range of health, education, and social care agencies. A social worker states that she 'couldn't ask for more from the home'.

Although no requirements or recommendations were set at the previous inspection, the home has clear strategies for improvement. These strategies are set out in the home's detailed and ambitious development plan. The plan has driven improvements in management training, recording, and multi-agency working. It also promotes improvements in recruitment processes. This ensures that the previous success of the home does not generate a culture of complacency.

Improvement is further promoted by robust quality assurance processes conducted by management and external visitors. These systems are good at identifying weaknesses and potential shortfalls. Actions generated through quality assurance processes are positively addressed by the home and result in improved standards of care. The home is very good at responding to complaints. The complaint procedure is used very positively by the manager to ensure the views of young people, their families, and other stakeholders are acknowledged and respected.

Staff meetings, supervision and appraisal systems are very well used to communicate the highest expectations to the staff team. Staff report that they value the opportunity to access developmental opportunities. Performance management systems are effective in providing challenge where work practice does not reach the highest standards expected by the home.

All staff are appropriately qualified in residential care. In addition, they are well trained in safeguarding, first aid, restraint, administration of medication and equality and diversity. Staff receive additional guidance to meet the particular needs of young people placed at the home. This includes training in child sexual exploitation, attachment disorders, and alcohol awareness. The home has arranged training that will enable staff to better support young people who have involvement in gangs. However, the training provider has withdrawn this training.

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.