

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC449155
Inspection date	19/02/2013
Inspector	Kevin Whatley
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	N/A
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Service information

Brief description of the service

The home provides four places for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The setting is one of two children's homes operated by the same private organisation who provide therapeutic care and education. This home is focused on providing care to adolescent young people, many of whom would have lived previously at the organisation's other children's home which caters for the younger age range. Young people placed at the home attend the organisation's school.

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**.

The home was registered in September 2012 and therefore this is the first inspection. Young people are provided with good standards of care, support and guidance. They generally make good progress in their lives, notably regarding their emotional development. Such progress is significant given young people's starting points when they move in to the home. Care planning and review is of a very high standard and promotes young people's individual needs. Such an approach is effective in practice and promotes positive outcomes.

Young people benefit considerably from meaningful and trusting relationships with staff. This enables young people to improve their self-esteem and feelings of self-worth to a large degree. Young people say that they are helped to reduce their risk-taking behaviours and are listened to. Young people's views clearly influence the day-to-day running of the home.

The home is good at keeping young people safe. When concerns arise, they are swiftly addressed in line with local child safeguarding protocols. Young people are provided with excellent adult support and guidance when they have placed themselves at risk. Staff respond swiftly and appropriately to unacceptable behaviour. Young people say they feel 'safe and looked after'.

Young people live in a home that provides a good standard of accommodation. The staff team work hard to provide consistently good standards of care and meet the young people’s individual needs. The home is managed extremely well; the Registered Manager provides strong, focused and forward-thinking leadership. The strengths and weaknesses of care provision are known and addressed, with aspirations to improve further.

Although medication is suitably and safely stored, the records of homely medicines are inaccurate. Records of restraint are generally kept well. However, entries do not always include comments by the Registered Manager as required by the homes own policies and procedures. In addition one recording in the sanctions log did not confirm an outcome or consequence for an incident of inappropriate behaviour. None of these shortfalls present a significant concern or impact negatively on the care provided. One requirement and one recommendation are made as a result of this inspection.

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
21 (2001)	the registered person shall make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home; in particular that stocks of homely remedies are accurately recorded. (Regulation 21 (1))	28/03/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a system in place to monitor the quality and adequacy of record keeping and take action when needed; in particular ensure the physical intervention and sanctions logs are completed in line with the home’s own policies and procedures. (NMS 22.1)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

Outcomes for young people are good and in some cases outstanding. Young people benefit considerably from individualised programmes of therapeutic care which matches their specific needs. Staff provide young people with committed and focused care and work extremely hard to support their learning and progress.

Young people make progress as a result of intensive and therapeutically-based programmes of care. Young people say, 'I have made so many improvements since being at the community...although things are not going so well at the moment, I have learned so much about myself since being here.' Social workers and parents stated that young people have made, 'very good progress' at the home and especially praised the hard work put in by staff and the high levels of communication with the home.

Young people receive excellent support, guidance and care to address their emotional wellbeing. As a therapeutic community, young people's emotional needs are of paramount importance. Such focused care enables them to gain a greater positive self-view and develop stronger emotional resilience. Young people who moved in to the home with extremely low levels of self-esteem have been able to grow within the environment. They now feel more confident about themselves. For example, young people who came with little or no confidence in public settings have been encouraged and supported to undertake voluntary work at a local charity shop. This is most telling given their poor starting point.

Young people are urged to lead as healthy a lifestyle as possible. Health care advice and guidance is readily available and ensures that young people receive specialist interventions. Staff are positive in encouraging young people to engage in physical exercise. Young people attend local gyms regularly and say they have become much healthier as a result. Young people are involved in menu planning and provided with meals that are nutritious and healthy.

Young people are extremely well supported and encouraged to engage in their education. The community run their own school which is situated nearby. Attendance levels are generally excellent, with young people who have poor educational histories improving greatly in this area. As a result young people with poor starting points have made significant progress in their educational attendance and achievements in their learning and development.

Young people are suitably encouraged to develop their independent living skills, receiving valuable support in this area. Individual programmes are put in place which encourage them to develop their living skills at a pace they can achieve. Young people are fully aware of what they need to do in order to progress and are involved with their link-workers in developing their independence plans.

All of the young people, subject to any agreed restrictions, benefit from being able to maintain appropriate contact with family, friends and other people who are important to them. Young people have mobile telephones for their personal use and have ready access to the home's telephone. This ensures they can make and receive calls at any time, including when they are away from the home.

Young people feel they have developed extremely meaningful and trusting relationships with staff. Comments including: 'There is always someone I can talk to and say how I really feel.' 'I am listened to and am always asked how I feel, even if I have been rude to staff,' were indicative of the views expressed by young people.

Quality of care

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

Young people receive a good quality of care. The therapeutic ethos of the home is supported by excellent standards of care planning and review. Young people benefit from constructive and positive relationships with staff and make good progress as a result.

Relationships between young people and staff are purposeful and trusting. The culture of the home is cemented firmly in the development of relationships with link-working being a significant factor in the delivery of care. Communication is fundamental to ensuring young people understand the ways they are being cared for. Interactions between young people and staff are relaxed, open and extremely caring.

Young people's views are promoted and valued. Young people say are listened to, that they can raise concerns easily and understand how to make a complaint. The staff team ensures that each young person has numerous opportunities to voice their feelings and opinions. A key aspect of the therapeutic environment is that group and one-to-one meetings take place daily. This enables young people to reflect on their thoughts and feelings and to give their views easily on the day-to-day running of the home.

Care planning is of the highest standard ensuring that young people's specific needs are met. Therapeutic plans of care are compiled which confirm the individual needs of each young person and how these are to be met. Comprehensive plans of care highlight physical, emotional and behavioural needs within a therapeutic context. Such plans match the overall aims of the placement and guide staff in how best to meet the individual needs of young people. Young people are involved in all aspects of care planning and contribute fully to their development. This ensures their cultural and personal identities and wishes are taken fully into account.

Regular reviews of care include advice and guidance from therapeutic childcare experts. Young people are involved in contributing to the development and review of their own plans and to participate in reviews. Social workers confirmed that care planning and reviews of placement are an on-going process undertaken by the home. Where necessary, meetings are arranged to ensure all parties are involved in 'working together' for the benefit of the young person concerned.

Young people's health care needs are met extremely well. A comprehensive approach to addressing their physical, emotional and psychological needs ensures

young people are provided with individualised care. Health care plans are completed which provide an extremely good overview of need and how these are to be met by staff. All young people are registered with local doctors, opticians and dentists and are assisted to attend appointments as and when required.

As a therapeutic community the emotional needs of young people are of paramount importance. A highly skilled staff team assist young people to make sense of their feelings and thoughts. This approach is a cornerstone of practice, with staff receiving expert advice and support in delivering intensive programmes of care. Consequently, young people make significant progress in developing feelings of self-worth and gain valuable insight into the issues which affect their behaviour and thinking.

Members of staff enable young people to take part in positive and enriching activities. This allows them to develop self-esteem and confidence and to experience making a positive contribution to the local community. Young people attend local scout and swimming clubs. Individual needs are well catered for and young people clearly enjoy one-to-one time with staff. This has been particularly beneficial in developing positive relationships.

Young people live in a home that offers them a good standard of accommodation. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms and do so with posters and pictures. The majority of the home is well maintained and homely in character and atmosphere.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

The home is good at keeping young people safe. A suitable recruitment procedure ensures only staff that have been appropriately checked work with young people.

Young people say they feel 'safe and looked after' and that they are helped to address their difficult or risky behaviour. A robust approach toward safeguarding ensures young people are kept as safe as possible. Staff receive good standards of training in child protection on a regular basis. Responses by the management team to safeguarding concerns are swift and in line with local protocols. When issues arise, the home ensures that all parties, including social workers, parents, the local police and link-workers, are brought together to identify strategies. This approach allows for comprehensive intervention plans to be implemented leading to reduced levels of risk or concern. This is most notable for young people when they are out in the wider community. Young people are getting, 'great help' in learning better ways to keep themselves safe.

Young people are given excellent support to enable them to behave appropriately. Boundaries and routines are an important aspect of daily life in the home and are consistently implemented by staff. Comprehensive plans are in place which highlight challenging behaviour. These guide staff in how best to deal with matters such as self-harm or aggression. This is coupled with a link-worker programme that provides

young people with constant opportunities to explore the reasons why they behave as they do. Although some young people are currently finding it difficult to manage their feelings appropriately, behaviour is excellent and respectful. The therapeutic approach ensures young people are continually engaged in discussion about their attitude and behaviour, leading to improved outcomes.

Staff utilise the meaningful relationships they share with young people to encourage them to behave well. As a result, the need to intervene physically is minimal. Staff are trained in the use of restraint, and de-escalation is a core aspect of practice. On the few occasions where restraint has occurred, good records are kept and monitored. However, a few entries do not record the comments or signature of a manager as required by the home's own policies. Staff are very mindful of potential issues within the young people's group and in doing so are often able to deflect situations of conflict.

An appropriate system of sanctions provides a suitable response to unacceptable behaviour. The use of sanctions is kept to an absolute minimum which is in keeping with the therapeutic culture of the home. Ideas of reparation and discussion are widely implemented. Young people say the rules are fair and acknowledge that they receive considerable support to deal with their feelings and thoughts in a constructive manner. Just one sanction has been used since the home opened but the record of this is not complete, although no further actions have been taken in this matter.

Robust protocols are in place for when young people go missing. These include individual risk assessments which highlight their risk and vulnerability. Appropriate liaison with the local police ensures that young people are reported missing in good time. Young people are given extremely good support to consider the reasons why they leave without permission and the risks they may face. In general young people, who arrived at the home with entrenched histories of running away, have been helped to reduce such behaviour significantly.

Health and safety is taken seriously, ensuring the safety of young people and staff alike. Regular checks and tests are completed, including fire drills and fire alarm checks. Routine servicing ensures all areas of the home are maintained appropriately including the testing of electrical installations and portable equipment.

Leadership and management

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

The leadership and management of the home is good. The Registered Manager is extremely experienced and displays a clear understanding of the individual, and group, living needs. He is also a director of the community and has a vast understanding of providing therapeutic care within residential settings. The Registered Manager runs the home extremely well and aspires to improving the service even further.

Information regarding the home and the services it offers is detailed and up to date. Young people receive their own guide when they move in, with care practices matching the aims and objectives of the homes Statement of Purpose.

A robust process is in place to address matters of complaint. Where issues arise responses are timely and include clear and appropriate outcomes. One complaint had been recorded and none have been received by Ofsted.

There are sufficient staff to meet young people's needs. Staff receive very good levels of training and undertake a thorough induction programme when they first join. All staff are expected to achieve a diploma in therapeutic child care, feeling positive about how such a qualification allows them to implement therapeutic theory into care practice.

Staff receive excellent levels of support and encouragement to work to the best of their abilities. They say they receive excellent leadership from the manager and his senior team and benefit from good quality supervision. The whole staff team receives regular clinical supervision which ensures they are supported to continually assess the feelings and ideas brought about from working so intensively. The home have a small and experienced team of bank staff who work regular shifts, ensuring there is no use of agency staff; this further supports the immense importance of consistent relationships.

Staff clearly understand the particular needs of young people in their care. They are committed to offering the highest standards of care and work hard to assist young people in meeting the aims and objectives of their placements.

The home is monitored extremely well, both from within and externally. The Registered Manager completes regular reviews of care with a format to record reports of these reviews. Monthly inspection visits are undertaken by the responsible individual. The findings of such visits provide a detailed and objective review of care and general conduct of the home.

Placing authorities comment most positively on how the home is run and young people's progress. Feedback includes statements such as 'very positive working relationship with home...a staff team who show remarkable resilience in their work'.

The home ensures that records are maintained accurately. All information relating to the progress and development of young people is kept up to date. Minutes of statutory reviews are sought and coupled with the high standard of record keeping, confirms the professional approach in place.

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.