

Two horizontal lines are positioned to the left of the title.

Howestead Lodge

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC000389
Inspection date	28/04/2011
Inspector	Leonard Hird
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Setting address	5 Two Ball Lonnen, NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE, NE4 9RN
------------------------	---

Telephone number	0191 2741085
Email	manager@howestead-lodge.co.uk
Registered person	Howestead Lodge Limited
Registered manager	Elsie Howe
Responsible individual	Robert Howe
Date of last inspection	18/01/2011

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.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service that exceeds minimum requirements

Satisfactory: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home is located in a quiet residential area of a major city. It has been converted from two semi-detached houses into a children's home. The home looks out onto a main road, with good access to public transport and a range of local amenities. The home can accommodate up to nine young people of either gender, aged from 10 to 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties for medium- to long-stay periods.

The accommodation includes individual lockable bedrooms for young people, one of which can be used as a double room for siblings who might wish to share. There are two lounges, a large dining room, kitchen, games area and a study area for young people. Externally there is a well-maintained garden to the rear of the home that includes a patio and an enclosed area for sports activities.

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

Young people are receiving good levels of care and support. The home works together with partner agencies to ensure young people can access a wide range of activities, opportunities and resources to assist in their future development.

Members of staff receive regular training, guidance and professional support from the home's management team to enable them to deliver a service which enables young people to live in a safe and caring environment. Regular meetings take place between the manager and the staff team to ensure the consistency of care practice. It is essential however, that the home's information about the outcomes for a young person are being maintained on the young person's care plan rather than in several different files.

All of the young people living at the home have been there for a considerable period and are benefiting from a long term stable placement. Members of staff work closely with young people to ensure they receive good levels of support and encouragement to succeed. This involvement and support is enabling young people to live in a homely environment that is safe and caring. Young people spoke positively about their life at the home and that they felt safe and cared for.

Areas for improvement

Recommendations

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

- ensure written records are clear and up-to-date when entering information about outcomes for young people. (NMS 22.5)

Outcomes for children and young people

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

—

—

Young people are benefiting from good levels of support and guidance given to them by the home's staff team. All of the young people living at the home are successfully attending school or are in full-time employment. Young people regularly receive certificates from their schools for achieving a 90% or higher attendance rate. A social worker commented, 'the young person that I am working with had some difficulties with school attendance previously to living at the home but the home has worked with the school to implement a timetable which matched the needs and capabilities of the young person concerned and they are now achieving well at school and have several certificates to prove this'.

For the young people who are in full time employment the home has developed links with the employers to ensure that young people are attending work. The home encourages young people to take part in activities such as shopping, the preparation and cooking of healthy food or travelling on public transport to assist them in acquiring some of the skills required for independent living. All of the young people who completed Ofsted's Children and Young People's Survey confirm that, members of staff help them to learn the skills that could help them in later life.

The home provides guidance for staff on the management of health care for young people through its health policy and procedures. Young people's individual health care and planning is managed by the link worker and this is supported by other members of staff. On each young person's health plan file there is a medical consent form from parents or where appropriate the local authority to ensure that emergency medical treatment and medication can be given. The safe storage, administration, recording and disposal of medication helps keep young people safe. Members of staff are first aid trained and if young people are unwell they attend either the local health centre or make an appointment with their doctor. Young people confirm that when they are unwell the home looks after them.

Each young person has a named link worker to provide support and guidance for them while living at the home. The link worker liaises with placing authorities and young people's families to ensure the care needs of the young person are in accordance with their care plans. Young people have their own individual care, health and education plans and these are regularly reviewed and updated in conjunction with them, their placing authority and the home. However, it is essential that the information gained from this process be more effectively linked to the individual young persons care plan to ensure that any outcome that may occur for a young person is clearly recorded in the care plan. A social worker commented, 'their client has a positive relationship with staff at the home and will talk openly with them regarding any worries or concerns he may have as well as requesting staff to advocate on their behalf in meetings and they chooses not to attend'. Young people confirm that the time they spend with their link worker is generally of benefit.

The home actively encourages young people to maintain contact with their friends and family by enabling them to visit the home or for the young people to visit the home's of their friend's in the local community. Where appropriate and after suitable checks have been satisfactorily completed young people have been able to undertake overnight stays or go on holiday with their friends and families. Young people

confirm that they can meet with their families and friends both at the home and in the community. The home provides support for this by offering supervised contact sessions, transporting young people to different venues or by providing travel cards for them to visit friends or relatives both locally and at a distance.

— **Quality of care**

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

Young people have an individual placement plan that details how their social, educational and health needs will be addressed by the home. The link worker and other staff encourage young people to play a full and active role in the development of their care plan. There are regular recorded educational and social care review meetings taking place to monitor the progress of the young people. Link workers provide support for young people at these meetings, to ensure their views are fully taken into account. Parents and carers where appropriate have opportunities to meet with members of staff, to discuss the care of their child in the home. A young person's social worker commented that, 'there are excellent communications between the home and children's services, the home's staff will contact me with any concerns either by telephone or email and the home's staff always attend reviews and meetings'.

Members of staff, management and young people meet on a weekly basis to discuss what is happening in the home and records are kept of these meetings. The home operates an open door policy for young people to speak to any member of staff including the registered manager or directors of the company. It is clearly evident that young people are very confident about being able to raise any issues with staff. Significantly, young people have recently been involved in helping in the home's recruitment process for a new member of staff. Young people indicate they are able to influence decisions about their lives at the home and feel members of staff keep them informed.

The home is a large detached house that is well decorated, maintained, furnished and homely in appearance. Young people's rooms are well decorated and personalised by the individual concerned. Each of the lockable bedrooms is carpeted and furnished with a single bed, chair, table and a wardrobe. There are good levels of bathing, showering and toileting facilities in the home for use by the young people and there are separate staff facilities. The home's lounges, dining areas and garden are spacious and well used by the group. Young people confirm they are happy with their individual and communal living space.

The home is providing a good and healthy diet which helps in the promotion of the health and physical well-being of the young people. Specialist dietary needs and different cultural requirements can be catered for as necessary. The staff who help in the preparation of food at the home have a qualification in food hygiene and ensure that all appropriate records are maintained. Menus are planned in conjunction with the young people and staff on a weekly basis but can be easily changed if necessary. Young people spoke positively about the quality, choice and quantity of food served at the home and that special events such as birthdays are celebrated.

During the inspection, young people and staff were observed interacting well together. There was a relaxed atmosphere prevailing in the home and working relationships were observed as being professional though friendly. A young person said, 'staff like to have a laugh with the young people and spend time with them. Young people confirm they feel they have good working relationships with staff and that they are well cared for by staff.

Safeguarding children and young people

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

Members of staff receive regular recorded training in child protection and behaviour management. Young people's welfare is protected through the application of the home's safeguarding policy, risk assessments and reporting procedures by members of staff. All of the staff demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities in keeping young people safe. The registered manager demonstrates a sound understanding of the legislation in respect of child protection and safeguarding. The home has developed good working relationships with relevant partner agencies including the community policing team. All of the young people confirm they feel safe living at the home.

Young people are protected through the home's rigorous approach to addressing any form of bullying behaviour including cyber or text bullying. The home's anti-bullying policy and procedure is followed in practice with members of staff and young people having a definite understanding of what they should do if incidents of bullying occur. Young people confirm that they are aware of the home's zero tolerance policy towards bullying but, as they indicated bullying does sometimes occur. The young people confirm that staff address this appropriately. Young people are aware of how to contact different youth organisations for support such as Childline, if they feel they are being bullied. A young person's social worker commented, 'that they believed that if the young person was being bullied that they would feel able to vocalise this appropriately'.

A clear policy and procedure on behaviour and discipline is in place and is followed in practice. Members of staff regularly receive training in behavioural management training including physical intervention. A young person commented, 'I know that the home has rules about when restraint can be used and that members of staff are very good at following them'. The home's records confirmed this. Reward incentives include a rewards scheme for achievement for good behaviour or excellent work. Very few sanctions have been given since the last inspection. All of the young people are aware of the sanction system and feel it is fair. There is a detailed policy, procedure and protocol on the actions to be taken when young people are absent without authority and this is being followed by the staff. Young people are benefiting from the positive and supportive relationships that are occurring at the home.

Young people's welfare is protected by the home's recruitment process. The home follows a clear policy on recruitment in line with the Department for Education guidance. A detailed record of the employment process showing Criminal Records Bureau checks, references, verbal reference checks and the formal interview process is maintained on the personnel file of members of staff.

Young people are safeguarded by a robust health and safety policy, detailed risk assessments and trained staff. The home and the young people are protected by effective monitoring of electrical, gas appliances and the safe storage of all substances hazardous to health. Maintenance issues are quickly identified and dealt with by staff to ensure young people are protected from potential hazards. Young people's welfare is further promoted by the use of comprehensive risk assessments in their day-to-day life and the safe storage of all substances hazardous to health.

Leadership and management

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

The home's informative Statement of Purpose is readily available for young people, their families and the placing authority. The document details how the home is managed on a day-to-day basis. There is an individual young person's guide which has been designed in conjunction with young people living at the home that outlines the services they can expect to receive while living there. Both of these documents contain information for young people on how they can contact different support organisations such as Action for Children, ChildLine, the local authority's Children's Rights Officer as well as an independent advocacy service. Thereby enabling young people to contact external organisations for support, guidance or information on any matter. The management team as part of their quality assurance process are reviewing these and the home's other documentation to ensure they are compatible with the new national minimum standards.

Members of staff are receiving good levels of support, training and supervision to maintain their professional development and monitor their performance. The management team is suitably qualified and provides effective leadership for the staff team to enable them to ensure young people are given the opportunities to succeed in life. Staffing levels are meeting the current needs and numbers of young people living at the home but can be easily increased by the manager if necessary. The stable, qualified and experienced staff team is demonstrating a strong commitment to meeting the complex and diverse needs of individual young people. Members of staff actively encourage and support young people to take part in a variety of community-based activities such as working with their local authority in making a video about life in care, taking part in sport, working with the Rights4Me group and a local community art project.

Unannounced monitoring visits are undertaken on a monthly basis by the company's appointed representative who is an experienced former residential social care practitioner. A written record of the visit and its findings are provided to the company and Ofsted. The findings of each visit are shared with the registered manager to ensure that the quality of service is maintained and if necessary, improved for young people. The registered manager assisted by senior members of staff undertake weekly and monthly quality assurance checks to ensure the home is delivering a good quality of care for the young people and where issues are identified from these checks then they are quickly acted upon. Similarly the home's management team responded quickly to address the recommendation made by Ofsted at the last inspection regarding the availability of the home's fire risk assessment.

Young people's care records are appropriately managed and are reflective of the good standard of care and support delivered. Quality assurance systems within the home make sure that records are well maintained, monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. All of the home's records are stored securely but for those paper records requiring long term archiving the home has entered into a contract with a specialist company that offers long-term confidential and secure archiving facilities.

Equality and diversity practice is **good**.

