

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Kristen Judd
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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.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding:	this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality
Good:	this aspect of the provision is strong
Satisfactory:	this aspect of the provision is sound
Inadequate:	this aspect of the provision is not good enough

Service information

Brief description of the service

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to seven young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged between 11 and 17 years. The ground floor houses a lounge/diner, kitchen and computer room. Each young person has their own bedroom. There are separate facilities provided for staff. The home is situated within reach of nearby towns and local amenities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

This is an overview of what the inspector found during the inspection.

This was a full unannounced inspection that concentrated on key national minimum standards. The ratings for being healthy and positive contribution are judged as good. Staying safe, enjoying and achieving, economic well-being and organisation are judged as satisfactory resulting in the overall judgement for this service being satisfactory. Young people were present during parts of the inspection.

This is a satisfactory service with good aspects. Placement plans are of a good standard and young people's individual needs are clearly identified. Issues raised at this inspection include improving the recruitment process and ensuring that young people are provided with a structured day when not engaged in full-time education.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Systems are in place to meet and monitor the health needs of young people. Individual files contained relevant information with regard to background health information of young people. Placement plans contain detailed information about young people's health needs which are reviewed. Records of appointments attended and treatment received are clearly maintained. Staff seek the support of healthcare professionals, where appropriate, and they support young people to access professional help with specific health issues, such as, the cessation of smoking. This ensures that the health needs of young people are met.

Staff have access to written guidance and training in relation to the storing, administering and disposal of medicines. The use of prescribed medication is

minimal. Staff administer medication which is stored safely in the home preventing unauthorised access. Staff receive first aid training and attend refresher courses, when required, to enable the home to have a qualified first aider on duty at all times. Written permission is sought from those with parental responsibility regarding the administering of first aid and non-prescribed medication.

Young people are provided with a balanced diet and have the opportunity to prepare their own snacks and drinks. Staff encourage young people to contribute to menus and take account of individual food preferences. Opportunities are made available to young people to help staff with food shopping and the preparation of some meals if they wish. Records are maintained of menus. Young people say that they are able to make drinks, have access to fresh fruit and always have a choice of food.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

All staff have Criminal Records Bureau checks in place. Additional checks such as written references and completion of application forms are obtained. However, on occasion, a reference is not sought from the last employer. In addition, one file contained two references from a previous employer that contained conflicting information. This information was not clarified. Recruitment practices are not sufficiently robust and potentially present a risk of harm to young people. The provider took immediate action regarding this matter.

There is guidance within the placement plans on how to manage specific behaviours for young people. Staff regularly remind young people of behaviour which is unacceptable. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for what they have done. Records of the sanctions used are maintained in a bound numbered book. Records indicate that there have only been a few given. Sanctions used may be, for example, a ban on the use of the home's car for leisure activities. This sanction does not affect a young person being taken to professional appointments or contact. Staff are able to manage behaviour without the regular use of restraint. Restrictive physical intervention is only used when necessary to protect the safety of young people or others. Staff are able to effectively work with young people who may display challenging behaviour.

The home has policies and procedures in place to promote young people's welfare and to ensure that they are protected from abuse. There are written policies, which are implemented in practice, in relation to child protection and countering bullying. Staff supervise interactions between young people and are aware of the potential for bullying to occur. They are trained in child protection and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding young people. Young people are provided with information on how to raise concerns or make a formal complaint about any aspect of living at the home they are unhappy with.

The home has a written policy on responding to young people who are absent without authority. Appropriate action is taken by staff in relation to such incidents,

including keeping detailed records and ensuring that the appropriate people are notified. Young people are given the opportunities to talk to staff on their return.

The arrangements for regular health and safety checks are effective in ensuring a physically safe environment. Young people and staff participate in fire drills ensuring that they are familiar with the evacuation procedures. Fire alarms and emergency equipment are regularly serviced and tested and records of when tests are conducted are well maintained.

Young people's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Bathroom and bedroom doors are fitted with locks to ensure young people's privacy. Young people have access to a telephone and they have their own mobile telephones which enables them to make and receive calls in private. There is guidance in place for searching young people's rooms when there are concerns. Staff maintain clear records of any searches that are undertaken. Young people's personal records are securely stored and staff have a good awareness of their responsibilities in this area.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

There is some information retained on the young people's files with regard to their educational background information. Some of the young people have a disrupted educational history and are not be in full-time education. There is evidence that staff liaise with relevant professionals in order to secure suitable educational placements. However, there is little evidence of structure to the day for young people when they are not accessing education during the day. There is a potential for young people who are unable to access education to make inadequate progress in their learning.

Young people have an allocated key worker and staff demonstrate a good knowledge about the needs of young people and how those needs are to be met. Young people have some opportunity to spend time on a one-to-one basis with their key worker. Detailed records are maintained of these sessions on individual files. Young people confirm that they can talk to the staff about any issues that they may have and are happy with the support they receive. Staff offer support to young people with every day matters, such as going shopping, attending appointments, contact or leisure activities. Young people are supported to access facilities in the community, such as going to the cinema and attending the gym. This helps young people to develop future life skills and pursue their individual interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are assessed appropriately and their placement plans outline how these needs are met. Placement plans are of a good standard and staff complete daily records which include details about care and support given to a young

person. Staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the individual needs of the young people and are aware of how those needs should be met. The plans are reviewed and discussed with young people, who are supported, in a sensitive way to attend their placement meetings and reviews by care staff. However, the outcome and actions following statutory reviews are not recorded on a young person's file. As such, there is no evidence that any decisions made at the review are addressed in a timely manner and this has the potential to impact on the effectiveness of the placement.

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. Placement plans contain information regarding contact arrangements including overnight stays and any restrictions in place. Transport is provided when needed to facilitate contact. This results in young people maintaining contact with those who play a significant part in their lives.

Young people are helped to move into, and leave, the home in a planned and sensitive manner. The home takes both planned and emergency placements. Adequate background information is obtained to ensure that the young people are appropriately placed.

There are systems in place to ensure that young people are consulted about the running of the home and decisions that impact on their daily lives. Young people are provided with forums both formally and informally to discuss any choices and views they may have. This can be with their key workers or with any staff member. Individual meetings are held. Records indicate that young people's views are sought on issues, such as menus and activities. Young people confirm that they have the opportunity to discuss any concerns that they may have.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Overall, the accommodation is decorated and furnished to a satisfactory standard and provides adequate facilities for their use. There is one main lounge with a dining area. An additional lounge is used as a computer room, however, at present it is also being used as a drying area for clothes which detracts for the overall presentation of the area. The young people each have their own bedrooms and see this as their personal space. They have the use of an appropriate amount of bathrooms and toilets which provide showering and bathing facilities. There is no domestic support; the expectation is that staff undertaken cleaning tasks while also providing care to young people. However, some areas of the home are not adequately maintained. For example, the bathroom is not adequately cleaned and there are a few stains on the carpets. There are other minor maintenance issues, such as a blind missing from the main bathroom, marked paintwork and the dining room chairs are unsteady. A delay in addressing cleaning and maintenance issues impacts on the overall presentation of the home.

Young people are encouraged to take care of their bedrooms on a weekly basis. Through day-to-day living young people are supported to develop the skills that they will need in adulthood. Examples of this include shopping, cooking, budgeting and laundry. Young people confirm they are suitably supported to purchase their own clothing and personal requisites. Staff support young people to develop skills to help prepare them for adulthood.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The registered manager has good systems in place to monitor the matters set out in Schedule 6 of The Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Visits to the home are undertaken by the nominated person to monitor its daily operation and reports made, which are available at the home. Where shortfalls are identified there is some evidence to show that action is taken promptly. Although the home is well managed and provides care with some good outcomes for young people, the shortfalls in the outcome judgement of staying safe has impacted on the overall outcome judgement for organisation.

Currently young people receive one to one care from staff to meet young people's needs. Rotas show there is a balance of gender of staff wherever possible. All staff complete a induction programme over a six month period that includes child protection training. Most of the staff in the home have either completed or are currently working towards the National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The individual placement plans demonstrate a commitment to ensuring that the needs of the individual young people are met. Menus take into account the needs of individual young people and there is an appropriate gender mix of staff within the home. The home has a written Statement of Purpose which guides parents or others requiring this information through what services they can expect from the home. Young people are provided with information about what they can expect from the home. For example, there is a young people's guide that provides relevant information and gives an overview of what young people can expect when living at the home. There is a personal file in place for each young person that is being maintained in line with the national minimum standards. All files are kept securely.

What must be done to secure future 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 Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is in place for all staff prior to being employed in the home (Regulation 26(3)(d))	10/12/2010
14	promote the educational attainment of children accommodated in the home in line with their age, aptitude needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18(1))	10/12/2010
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home are kept clean and reasonably maintained. (Regulation 31(2)(c)(e))	03/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the result of all statutory reviews are recorded on the child file and the individual responsible for pursuing the actions at the home arising from the reviews are clearly identified. (NMS 3.4)