

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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

The children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to six young people aged between 12 and 17 years of either gender. The home provides long-term residential care to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is situated in a residential area in a village location. It is close to public transport and motorway networks and is not far from the town centre.

The accommodation on the ground floor comprises of a lounge, dining room, conservatory, two kitchens, one of which is used by young people who are preparing for independence. There is a downstairs toilet and two offices. On the first floor there are seven bedrooms, offering single occupancy rooms for young people. There are sufficient bathroom facilities for young people to use. Staff sleeping-in rooms are available on both floors.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The focus of this key unannounced inspection was to find out how well the home meets the needs of the young people who live there. The team continues to be made up of diverse and competent people who offer a range of experience and skills. The team has developed in morale, enthusiasm and coupled with good management and leadership has improved the standard of care for young people. The team provides a safe and caring environment and young people's individual needs are well met and harnessed. A number of young people are making good progress in all outcome areas. They have developed good relationships with staff, resulting in fewer behaviour management controls and their sense of security is enhanced.

However, some shortfalls were identified. The service must submit the Registered Manager's application to Ofsted without further delay. This will ensure that there continues to be effective leadership of the staff team so that the home is organised to ensure the best possible childcare is delivered. It will also make the current manager accountable and responsible for the quality of service provided to young people in the home. The process with respect to verifying Criminal Record Bureau clearance with agencies has not been robust. The actual meals that young people consume are not routinely recorded. Copies of statements of educational needs are not on the files of the young people who have them. Improvements made in all these important areas will further contribute to the promotion of young people's safety, welfare and developmental needs.

Improvements since the last inspection

The service has made good progress to ensure compliance with the actions and good practice recommendations made at the last inspection.

The Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and approved. It accurately reflects the age range that the home is registered to admit. This means that the information is clear and breaches to the home's conditions of registration are reduced. Young people are involved in the development of their placement plans and there is evidence that some young people have signed them. The manager of the home has been provided with greater involvement in the making of placements. This means that the needs and likely effects of admissions on the existing group of young people is taken into account by a well informed manager. Action has been taken to improve the records in relation to measures of control, although more could be done to ensure staff follow the instructions. Improvements have been made to the appearance of the home. There are ongoing plans to decorate the young people's bedrooms. The use of agency staff has reduced and some have been appointed to the home. The training that they need in behaviour management and safeguarding training will be resolved.

Young people are discouraged from smoking. All risk assessments have been updated and reviewed.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to enable young people to obtain individual support, guidance and advice. Staff are deployed to meet the needs and numbers of young people. There is currently one vacancy at the home that is filled by substantive and agency staff. These improvements mean that young people get the individual support they need, are encouraged and supported to improve their health through the anti-smoking message and are cared for and monitored by staff in suitable numbers.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's good health and well-being is actively promoted. The meals provided are homemade and provide good nutritional content, balance and a good 'five a day' variety. They meet young people's cultural needs and for some, improve their eating habits. However, the actual meals consumed is not regularly monitored. This means that staff are not able to satisfy themselves that young people are eating properly and at suitable intervals. Young people are consulted about menu choices and can help to shop with staff and prepare food. The kitchen is well stocked and is accessible to young people who can help themselves to drinks and snacks. This means that they can develop independence skills that will be of benefit to them in the future. Mealtimes are positive social occasions and suitable space is available for young people and staff to dine together around the table.

Young people have health plans contained in their placement plans. These detail young people's health needs and how they will be met. Young people are registered

with the doctor, dentist and optician. Specialist services, such as the children's mental health services are provided as appropriate. Good advice and support is also available from drug, alcohol and sexual health services. Professionals from these teams are available to meet with young people and staff to discuss support strategies to help support young people. Young people are supported to attend health appointments alone or with staff and the outcome of the visits are recorded. The looked after children's nurse visits the home and undertakes health needs assessments with the young people and offer advice and support on a range of health issues. Staff also advise young people on issues, such as smoking and the promotion of good hygiene standards. These measures ensure that young people's health needs are well met and they get good support and advice about living healthy lifestyles.

The arrangements to ensure the safe administration of medication is good. Staff are trained to safely administer first aid and medication and ensure the appropriate consents for medical treatment are in place. Young people can self-administer medication with appropriate risk assessments. Young people who have accidents are properly treated. This means that young people are protected by safeguards that promote their welfare.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people do not share bedrooms and they have their own key. This means that they can keep their possessions safe. Young people also have a secure storage facility in their room to store their personal items. Young people sign up to a room searching contract that allows staff to search their room if there is a suspected risk to their health and safety. Young people have access to the home phone and mobiles, both of which can be used in private. Information about young people is confidentially stored and shared. These practices mean that young people's privacy, dignity and confidentiality is well respected.

Young people benefit from good arrangements that protect them from abuse, bullying and unauthorised absences. Young people are informed about the complaints procedure and they are not adverse to making their views known if they are unhappy about something. Two complaints have been made since the last inspection. These were appropriately dealt with and responses were provided within suitable timescales. This means that young people's concerns are listened to and they are taken seriously. Young people who have left the home have complimented the team in appreciation of the care and support they provided during their stay.

Most staff are trained in safeguarding children and young people. Detailed information is maintained of any incidents of concern. Staff contribute to safeguarding strategy meetings and follow child protection plans and risk assessments. Staff also have positive contacts with safeguarding agencies. This means that staff can appropriately respond to safeguarding concerns to protect young people and promote their safety. Young people understand that bullying

behaviour is not acceptable and this is regularly monitored. Some young people have been bullied. Staff intervene when observed or it has been brought to their attention. Staffing around the home ensures their increased vigilance. Staff follow clear protocols when young people go missing and work in partnership with relevant agencies to ensure their safe return.

Young people benefit from positive and nurturing relationships with staff. These are developed over time and show clear signs of mutual respect. For example, staff say that young people listen to them when discussing their behaviour and this is well received. This helps young people feel valued, safe and individual, which they show in the way they relate to each other. Staff are trained in behaviour management, present as positive role models and are good at de-escalating situations before they get out of control. Young people understand the rules, boundaries and the consequences if they present with poor behaviour. This is reflected in the low levels of sanctions in recent months and no restraints since the last inspection. Young people are aware about their rights and responsibilities and have opportunities to comment about their treatment to staff and other professionals involved in their lives. The home has developed positive links with the community police officer and the safer neighbourhood team.

Young people are protected in the home by good health and safety arrangements. Regular checks on the fire systems are performed to ensure they function properly. A fire inspection was undertaken by an officer from the fire and rescue department. They checked the layout of the home and provided advice. The fire risk assessment has been updated and compliance with checks are monitored monthly. Some young people were invited to watch a video about the dangers of reckless fire setting and smoking in bedrooms. The contents had an impact on the young people at the time. Young people have individual risk assessments with respect to their behaviours, level of risk and show how they can be minimised.

The process for verifying enhanced Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) disclosures from agencies who supply staff to cover staff absences has not been clearly evidenced or shared with the home's manager. It is therefore not clear how the suitability of staff is ascertained before they enter the home. This has led to reactive practices during the recruitment process when issues have been raised. Action has been taken by the service to improve this crucial area of practice. The matter was addressed prior to the inspection and the arrangement is that agency staff can only work at the home on sight of original copies of their enhanced CRB. There is no evidence that the shortfall in practice impacted on the safety of young people and lessons have been learned and rectified, but need to be sustained in all cases.

Visitors to the home are appropriately checked and monitored. This means that young people are safeguarded by people who may pose a risk to them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good opportunities to enjoy and achieve. Their individual needs are understood and supported by staff who also act as key workers in teams of three. Young people are also supported by professionals from services, such as social care, health, education, leaving care and any other identified service. This means that young people's individual needs are well met and supported.

Education is given a high priority at the home. All young people attend an educational provision and they are expected to attend school, college and educational placements. Staff work closely with educational provisions, social workers and other educational professionals to ensure that they know what the plans are for young people. Staff find these services invaluable and young people respond positively. All young people have a personal education plan, information relating to attainment levels, timetables and achievements are obtained. However, not all young people who have a statement of educational needs have these on their files, despite staff requests. All young people have a laptop and there are suitable resources in the home for young people to do their homework. This means that young people are well supported with their education and they are provided with opportunities to aim high.

Activities are actively promoted and encouraged. This means that young people are provided with opportunities to develop and enhance their social skills and encounter new experiences. Most of the young people went on a summer holiday. This was a very positive experience for young people and staff and resulted in good trusting and bonding connections between young people and staff. This has subsequently continued after the holiday and has improved some of the relationships in the home. Young people are also involved in activities individual to them, such as boxing, cinema, horse riding and trips away. Board games and home based activities take place. Young people also have access to a range of DVDs that they can watch with their visitors and families.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are appropriately placed at the home and managers have recently become involved in the making of suitable placements. This is good because decisions can be made by the manager, who has first hand expertise with respect to the needs of the young people and competence and capacity of the staff team to meet needs. This ensures that greater consideration is given to the existing group of young people and minimises any disruption. The admissions procedure enables young people to visit the home and have an overnight stay before moving in. Staff work closely with the placing social workers to help young people move on in a planned way where possible.

Placement plans developed by the home demonstrate how young people's needs will be met. Young people are encouraged to sign to demonstrate that they have read, understood and are involved in their care planning. The plans are regularly updated and monthly reports demonstrate young people's progress and development. The staff are fully involved in young people's statutory reviews. They provide reports and encourage young people to attend and contribute to the meetings. The written recommendations following reviews are not always received in a timely manner. Staff make a record of them so that they can expedite any actions required by them.

Contact arrangements are positively promoted. Staff work closely with social workers and families to ensure that young people have approved contact with their families and significant others. The home welcomes appropriate friends and family members to the home and staff may facilitate contact away from the home.

Young people are regularly consulted formally and informally and they have opportunities to have a say about their care and the running of the home. Young people are encouraged to attend young people's meetings to discuss issues, such as menus, activities and personalising their rooms. Key work sessions help young people to discuss their care plans. Their views are listened to and taken into consideration when decisions are made.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are actively encouraged to develop independence skills and prepare them for adulthood. For example, young people are supported with budgeting, routine domestic jobs around the home, such as laundry, cleaning their own rooms, help with choosing menus and preparing their own meals, snacks and drinks. The home works closely with the leaving care team to support young people to develop their independence skills. Young people have engaged with pathway planning with staff support and the leaving care service and there is good support for young people attending sixth form college and work placements. There is a second kitchen in the home specifically used for independence planning. This means that young people have good opportunities to develop life long skills that promote their economic wellbeing.

The accommodation provides young people with a homely environment to live in. The home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. It is clean, tidy and regularly maintained. Pictures and ornaments around the home provide personal touches and there are no obvious signs of damage in the communal areas. Young people's rooms are personalised and improvements are planned in consultation with them to upgrade their bedrooms. The manager has checked with the health and safety professional that the proximity of the sink units in bedrooms to the electric points does not pose a risk to young people and meets the health and safety threshold.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose is detailed and accurately describes how young people will be cared for. The young people's guide provides information about the home and includes details about the complaints procedure and relevant contacts. Young people's files contain information, recorded in a sensitive and respectful manner about young people's plans for their care and the progress they are making. Files are audited and can be accessed by the young people. Staff have visited placing social work offices to read the childcare files to get further background information about young people. This helps them to understand the experiences and behaviour of young people and helps them to provide appropriate care.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evidenced throughout the outcomes areas. Young people's individual needs are well met. The management and staff team clearly demonstrate that they know the young people, what the issues are for them and how they can support them in conjunction with their placement plans. Young people are cared for by a diverse staff team in relation to age, gender, race and experience. Staff are trained in equality and diversity issue to raise their awareness and assist them in their work. Young people are encouraged to celebrate a diverse range of festivities, such as birthdays, Halloween, cultural nights, integration in community events and holidays. This means that young people have a range of opportunities to gain a clearer appreciation of different cultures, values and experiences that enhance their awareness.

Young people are cared for by experienced, competent and motivated staff who are interested in them and work hard to promote their safety and welfare. Staff are well lead by a supportive management team who are committed to raising standards and improving the lives of young people. Staffing is deployed to meet the changing needs of the young people. There is a vacancy that is filled by agency workers known to the young people or from existing staff. Staff appreciate the changes made in recent months, feel well supported, valued and express high levels of satisfaction in their work. Staff are well retained and are appropriately trained and supervised to meet the needs of the young people. Recent training has been specific to the young people's needs, such as solution focused therapy, cognitive behaviour, self-harm and bereavement training. In addition a significant number of staff have achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 and senior staff have attained the NVQ at level 4 in management and are working towards further childcare qualifications. This is good and indicates that young people are cared for by staff who can understand and meet their needs. However, the service must submit the Registered Manager's application to Ofsted without further delay. This will ensure that there continues to be effective leadership of the staff team so that the home is organised to ensure the best possible childcare is delivered.

The quality of care is monitored every month by the manager and a visitor on behalf of the responsible individual. The strengths and areas for development are actively

scrutinised and action plans are followed. This means that young people benefit from improved standards of care.

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
34	ensure that the appointed manager of the children's home is registered with Ofsted (Regulation 7(1)(b))	30/11/2010
27	ensure that the recruitment policy is reviewed and followed with respect to all staff who work with children in the home that makes clear that all requirements of Schedule 2 of the children's homes regulations are met, in particular, verification of original enhanced Criminal Records Bureau clearance before agency staff commence work in children's homes. (Schedule 2)	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- make a record of the actual meals provided to young people to monitor the provision of a suitable and varied diet (NMS 10.4)
- obtain copies of the statement of educational needs for young people who have them (NMS 14.2)
- complete the planned programme of refurbishment to ensure that the home is maintained in a good state of decorative repair. (NMS 24.3)