

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Chris Scully
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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 home is run by a county council and provides care and support to seven young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The age range of the young people cared for is from 11 to 18 years old. Five beds are allocated for permanent residential use. One bed is for the purpose of very short-term emergency admissions, with the other bed providing a leaving care provision.

The main accommodation for the young people is on the ground floor. There is a first floor annexe which provides self-contained accommodation for one of the seven young people to experience living independently. The home is situated in a busy residential area on the outskirts of a large town centre and young people have easy access to a range of community facilities.

There were four young people living in the home at the time of the visit, and two young people contributed to the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced interim inspection. One outcome area was looked at during this inspection, which was staying safe. The inspector considered the progress that the home has made in relation to the recommendations raised at the last inspection. These related to policies, risk assessments, and documentation.

The home continues to be a good service that meets most of the national minimum standards. Young people spoken to state everything is fine. Young people are cared for by an experienced and competent staff group. Staff genuinely care for young people and their safety is a priority. As a result they work well with young people to help them deal with their problems.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions were raised at the previous inspection. The home was asked to consider five points of good practice. Firstly, to ensure child protection procedures are consistent with local interagency procedures and that they are submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The home has revised its safeguarding procedures and has had these ratified by the Local Safeguarding Children Board. All staff are familiar with the procedures which means they are able to take appropriate action to protect young people from harm.

Secondly, to ensure that reference requests for staff state whether there are any

concerns relating to applicants' suitability. This request for information is now included on applicants' reference checks resulting in more robust recruitment procedures.

Thirdly, to record in writing and regularly review the risk assessments for the premises and grounds. Risk assessments are now in place and areas of concern are reviewed on a regular basis. The Registered Manager regularly reviews the risk assessments to ensure they are up to date. This means potential risks are minimised or eliminated.

Fourthly, to consult with the fire authority about updating the fire risk assessment, and including clear and specific guidance regarding the safe use of fire doors. The Registered Manager consulted with the fire authority who stated doors could be wedged open if staff were in the room. This information has been relayed to staff and new procedures implemented to ensure no fire door is left wedged open. Staff have been made aware of the new procedures and on the day of inspection no fire doors were wedged open.

Finally, to ensure key workers provide individual guidance and support in relation to the assessed needs and objectives of the placement by making this evident within records of direct work. Key workers are recording discussions and work that takes place with the young person on their key worker sheets. This means a permanent record is held on all work carried out with young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust and young people are helped to feel safe and consider their own personal space and that of others. Privacy and safety is carefully balanced by staff in everyday life. Young people have single bedrooms and are able to personalise these, such as choosing the paint colours and their bedding. Rooms are periodically searched by staff, however, the record of room searches does not fully meet the standards. The reason for the search is not always clear and all persons involved in the search do not sign the record. Policy, procedure, training and safeguarding practice is clear and informative so staff know how to respond in the event of an allegation or disclosure. For example, effective action was taken in relation to a potential safeguarding issue. This ensured the appropriate persons were notified and young people are protected from potential harm.

Young people know how to complain. Their concerns are listened to and always addressed by staff. Young people receive information on the outcome of the

complaint and information on how to take this further if they are unhappy with the outcome. Young people state that everything is 'fine and 'okay'. Systems are in place for young people to meet as group to discuss issues relating to the home and their activities. However, due to the timing of these meetings they have not taken place for some time as young people are out of the home. While young people are able to discuss these issues individually with staff they have limited opportunities to discuss these as a group and come to some resolutions.

Young people are protected by well-planned, safe care practice and by staff who develop skills in managing young people with challenging needs. Staff give high priority to protecting young people from harm. They liaise well with other professionals to discuss areas of concern and put strategies into place to support young people and help keep them safe. Bullying is not an issue at this time. Staff are aware of the potential for this and provide good levels of supervision and encourage young people to discuss any concerns with them. Key workers work with young people on conflict resolution strategies, so that they are able to deal with issues in a constructive manner.

Staff place strong emphasis on encouraging young people not to go missing. They encourage young people to let them know where they are and talk to them about the potential dangers of not coming home. Detailed risk assessments and a clear understanding of the young people mean they act swiftly should a young person be missing. For example, good relationships with school means staff are quickly alerted to a young person missing from their lesson. Staff initiate the agreed procedures effectively; quickly locating the young person and encouraging them to return to school. Follow up calls to school ensure that the young person has indeed returned to school.

Staff encourage acceptable behaviour and ensure challenging behaviour is effectively addressed. This is supported by comprehensive behaviour management plans, risk assessments and staff's positive relationships with young people. Young people are aware of what standards of behaviour are expected and the consequences of poor behaviour, for example, not coming home at the agreed times. Restraint is sometimes necessary and staff are trained to do this safely. Although, staff are failing to record the duration of each restraint in the bound record.

Young people are cared for in a generally safe environment. However, some repairs have not been satisfactorily addressed or identified. For example, one shower room remains out of use due to safety issues and another has mould in the shower cubicle. Also damaged picture frames have not been removed, some bedroom carpets are soiled, a number of drawers are missing from young people's bedrooms and one wardrobe has been damaged resulting in nails being exposed. These issues pose a risk to young people's safety. Fire drills are carried out on a regular basis to ensure young people know how to evacuate in an emergency.

Thorough recruitment and vetting procedures mean young people are cared for by suitable people. For example, staff undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check.

Visitors to the home are suitably vetted which means staff are able to protect young people from potential abusers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all searches of young people's possessions are documented showing the time and the date and the reason, noting what if anything was found, who carried out the search and who was present at the time. Such records should be signed by all those present (NMS 9.8)
- ensure there is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment and any damage is repaired promptly. In particular action is taken to repair the shower room, the damaged wardrobe, missing draws from young people's bedrooms, the removal of the picture frames and stained bedroom carpets (NMS 24.3)
- ensure the record of restraint clearly identifies the duration of the restraint (NMS 22.9)
- ensure that young people are encouraged to meet regularly in groups, as well as

individually with staff, to discuss the general running of the home, to plan activities and to make their views known. (NMS 15.6)