

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Steve Pearson
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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 three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties aged between 11 and 17 years. The ground floor has 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 an unannounced, interim inspection. It assessed the key national minimum standards (NMS) associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe. It also partly assessed outcomes associated with the organisation of the children's home.

The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the three requirements and one recommendation made at the previous inspection on 16 November 2010. These were about seeking sufficient information before making recruitment decisions, promotion of education for young people, the cleanliness of the home and recording the outcomes of statutory care reviews.

At the time of the inspection, two young people were living in the children's home. Both were present during the inspection and one of them spoke to the inspector about the care they receive.

The quality of outcomes associated with safety and organisation are sound. The Registered Manager and staff enable young people to have their privacy; they enable them to raise any concerns; they receive training in how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse and in how to counter bullying. The premises are maintained in a safe condition and the team aim to promote positive behaviour through rewards as well as occasional sanctions.

However, risk assessment procedures for bullying are weak and young people are not being adequately encouraged to express their views about the use of sanctions. In addition, the registered persons are not always identifying gaps in the employment histories of people who apply for employment. Important information about the staff who work or have worked at the home is not always kept on the premises.

Additionally, the home is not complying with the contents of its Statement of Purpose. Specifically, the home is supposed to have an assistant manager but nobody has been appointed to that position since the home opened 10 months ago.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the previous inspection, outcomes associated with education have improved. Those young people who are not in full time education are now being offered an appropriate variety of educational alternatives including home tuition and vocational training.

The overall quality of accommodation has improved because the inside of the house has been repainted, the bathroom is clean and a window blind has been fitted.

The staff are able to be clear about the needs of young people because the outcomes of statutory reviews are now recorded in each young person's case file after the review.

However, recruitment procedures are still not adequately robust because the registered persons do not always obtain all the necessary information from prospective candidates before making a recruitment decision. For example, they do not always obtain a full employment history without any unexplained gaps. Consequently a requirement made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The Registered Manager and staff promote young people's need for privacy. Young people can make and receive telephone calls without having to seek permission, they can lock their bedroom doors and the staff only search bedrooms if there are concerns about welfare.

The staff team also enable young people to raise concerns formally and informally. Most issues of concern are dealt with quickly at an informal level.

All the staff receive regular training in child protection from experts in their field. This enables them to be clear about how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. The staff are effective at ensuring bullying does not take place and they also receive training about this. However, risk assessment procedures to counter bullying are weak. For example, there is no generic risk assessment of the times and places where bullying may occur in the house. The risk of any young person being a victim and perpetrator of bullying is also not routinely assessed.

Young people sometimes go missing from the home but they usually return late

rather than go missing for long periods. The reasons why young people go missing are not related to any aspect of care provided by the home. If any young people do go missing, the staff on duty record this clearly and comprehensively.

The Registered Manager and staff promote positive behaviour appropriately. Sanctions are rarely used but when are used they are fair and proportionate. The use of physical intervention is also very rare. The staff receive training in how to respond to challenging behaviour and how and when to restrain young people if necessary. However, the recording of sanctions does not provide for full accountability. For example, young people are not offered the opportunity to write their own comments in the recording book and they are not offered the opportunity to sign the records.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Plans are in place for professional technicians to regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. However, the home has not been operating for more than a year and so such tests have not been undertaken yet. An external expert has conducted a health and safety assessment of the children's home. One of their recommendations has not been carried out yet. This is a recommendation that the staff should receive training in how to conduct safety checks of the home's vehicle, for example how to test the air pressure in the tyres.

Generally speaking the recruitment procedures are adequate. However, it is of some concern that a full employment history is not in place for all the staff. Legislation requires that this is in place before any recruitment decision is made. A requirement to conduct all the necessary checks was made at the previous inspection. This has not been complied with so it has been repeated for a second time. Additionally, a record of all the necessary information about the staff that work, or have worked, at the home is not being kept on the premises. The information is being kept at the head office of the registered provider. However, such information must be kept at the children's home to ensure accessibility if needed at any time by a regulatory body such as Ofsted.

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 satisfactory.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose which describes its function and how it operates. The organisational structure is described in the document, and it states that the home has an assistant manager. Despite the registered provider's efforts to recruit someone, the home has not employed an assistant manager since it started operating 10 months ago. The lack of such a role makes it harder for the Registered Manager to manage the home effectively, especially in relation to decision-making and completion of administration when the Registered Manager is absent, for example when they are on leave.

The record of training undertaken by the staff is incomplete. This means it is harder for the Registered Manager to plan further training and it is difficult for Ofsted to be assured that training is appropriate.

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	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4. In particular, item 2 of Schedule 4, a register of staff who work or have worked in the children's home (Regulation 29(1))	14/02/2011
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is in place for all staff prior to being employed in the home (Regulation 26(3)(d))	14/02/2011
1	ensure that the children's home is at all times conducted in a manner which is consistent with its Statement of Purpose. This relates to implementation of the organisational structure as described in the Statement of Purpose, and in particular the appointment of an assistant manager. (Regulation 4(6))	25/05/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure a written record of all training for all staff is maintained in the home (NMS 31.4)
- carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest, and assess for each young person the risks of them being bullied and of them bullying others (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that when disciplinary measures are used, young people are encouraged to sign their names alongside their recorded views in the documentation kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
- ensure positive steps are taken to keep children and staff safe from the risks of hazards. In particular this relates to the health and safety adviser's recommendation that the staff receive training in how to conduct routine car safety checks such as measuring tyre pressures. (NMS 26.1)