

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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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.

At this unannounced interim inspection, the promotion of young people's safety was assessed. Actions and good practice recommendations made at the last inspection were also revisited.

Six young people were living in the children's home at the time of the inspection. Some of them spoke to the inspector about the care they receive.

The home promotes good safety arrangements for young people. Staff are proactive and ensure that they work effectively as a team and with relevant safeguarding agencies to ensure that any concerns are raised, addressed and monitored. The young people are settled at the home and most understand and respect the boundaries. Relationships between staff and young people are very good, which promotes socially acceptable behaviour and stability in the home. Young people know how to complain and have access to external professionals who provide advocacy and good support. Their concerns are promptly responded to and taken seriously. Compliments received by the home indicate the good services that young people receive from the staff team. The overall health and safety of home is assessed as safe. Regular checks of the fire systems, gas, electric appliances and risk assessments are implemented and are reviewed.

There are some shortfalls identified at this inspection with regard to the recording of sanctions, access to an independent person after a period of unauthorised absence,

risk assessment for bullying in relation to the premises, detail included in individual risk assessments and access to the amended recruitment protocol.

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered provider was asked to make some improvements at the last inspection. Two actions were made. These were to ensure that there is a Registered Manager appointed at the home. The manager's application to register with Ofsted has not been received. This is despite the urgency expressed at the last inspection about the importance of there being a Registered Manager at the home. The statutory requirement made at the last inspection is reiterated because a response is needed.

Improvements have been made that promotes the safer recruitment of staff. However, the protocol to enable managers to follow best practice in this area is not accessible to them.

The registered provider was asked to address three good practice recommendations. These relate to ensuring actual meals are recorded, obtaining copies of the statement of educational needs for young people who need them and completing the refurbishment of the home. Although young people receive a diverse range of good, home cooked meals, this is not recorded as served in the permanent records. This does not demonstrate that young people are provided with a healthy, balanced diet.

Young people who need a statement of educational needs now have a copy available in the home.

The home is well furnished, decorated and maintained. This is with the exception of the young people's rooms that have not yet been refurbished.

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.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is well promoted and respected. Information about young people is securely stored and information about them is confidentially shared. Young people have their own room and key. This means that they can keep their possessions safe. Staff respect young people's privacy when entering their rooms, ensuring that they knock and receive an invitation before entering. Young people have access to a home phone and mobiles, both of which they can use in private.

Young people know how to complain. Staff ensure that young people are informed about the complaints procedure in a format that they can understand. Young people also have good access to the children's rights team. Since the last inspection, three complaints have been made. These have been promptly acknowledged and addressed. Young people are provided with written feedback and an opportunity to make representation if they are unhappy with the outcome. This demonstrates that young people are listened to and their concerns are taken seriously. Compliments have also been received about the services provided to young people at the home.

Young people are protected by policies, procedures and practices that keep them safe. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to safeguard young people, which is enhanced by relevant training. Young people spoken with say they feel safe in the home. They have developed good relationships with staff, which enables them to approach staff if they have any concerns or worries. Staff have good contacts with safeguarding agencies and ensure multi-agency participation to keep young people safe. Staff are aware of young people's potential to bully and monitor and respond to it when detected or it is brought to their attention. Young people have individual risk assessments with respect to aspects of bullying behaviour, however, there is no risk assessment for bullying in relation to the premises.

Unauthorised absences from the home are low. On the rare occasions that young people go missing, good and effective protocols are followed with the police. Staff also make good efforts to contact young people on their mobile phones to ascertain their whereabouts and encourage them to return. Absences are recorded. However, the practice of an independent person visiting young people to consider the reasons for their absence has not happened. This is set out in the statutory guidance for local authorities on children missing from care.

Young people's behaviour is well managed. Young people have developed positive relationships with staff and the home environment is relatively settled as a result. Staff are trained in an approved behaviour management technique and are due to undertake new training to enhance their practice. Clinical advice and support is provided to the team with respect to behaviour management issues. The rules and boundaries in the home are made clear to young people to ensure consistency. The needs of young people who may present more challenging behaviour are discussed in the staff team and monitored. Positive handling plans involve the contribution of young people to identify where they need to be supported and learn strategies to help modify their behaviours. Positive incentives outweigh negative consequences, which is indicative of the progress that young people are making. No young people have been restrained for some time. Sanctions are monitored to ensure they are fair and proportionate. However, the records do not fully meet the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. For example, the pages are not numbered, times are not recorded, no comments are made by young people about the fairness of sanctions and entries are not recorded page by page.

Good health and safety practices protect young people and others in the home. Fire tests and drills are regularly carried out and involve the young people. A simulated night-time fire drill has been done. A fire officer has visited the home to undertake

an assessment of the premises. An up-to-date health and safety risk assessment has also been completed by a professional who is competent to undertake this role. These measures ensure that everyone knows how to keep safe in the event of a fire. Gas and electric appliance tests are up to date and the portable appliance test is due for renewal next year. An environmental health visit at the home has raised some minor issues that have been addressed. Risk assessments of young people's likely and known activities are in place, and are regularly reviewed. However, not all of the risk assessments provide sufficient detail that makes clear how staff need to respond to certain behaviours.

No new staff have been recruited since the last inspection. Improved practices have been introduced to ensure the safer recruitment of staff. This includes the inclusion of the human resources professional on the recruitment panel. This enhances the practices with respect to complying with the recruitment procedures and keeping young people safe. However, the amended protocol to support the improvements, particularly with respect to Criminal Records Bureau checks for all staff who work in the home are not accessible.

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?

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))	31/03/2011
33	ensure robust monitoring of all care practices in the home. In particular, closer attention being paid to checking the record of meals as served to demonstrate the provision of a suitable and varied diet, maintaining sanction records that comply with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and ensuring detailed risk assessments for young people who need them. (Regulation 34, Schedule 6)	31/03/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that procedures for identifying the action to be taken when a young person is absent without authority cover the action to be taken on the young person's return; specifically young people are seen by an independent person on their return to the home to consider the reasons for absence (NMS 19.2)
- carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest (NMS 18.5).
- complete the planned programme of refurbishment to ensure that the home is maintained in a good state of decorative repair (NMS 24.3)
- make the recruitment protocol accessible to allow managers to see them. (NMS 27.1)