

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035352
Inspector	Mary Timms
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered person	Northamptonshire County Council
Registered person address	Northamptonshire County Council, John Dryden House 8-10 The Lakes NORTHAMPTON NN4 7YD
Responsible individual	Satinder Gautam
Registered manager	Timothy George Morrison
Date of last inspection	24/03/2014

Inspection date	06/11/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	There has been no enforcement action since the last inspection.

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The high standard of care provided supports young people to make good progress across all aspects of their welfare and development. Young people recognise their individual progress and value the support that they receive from staff. Comments from young people include 'it gets better and better here every day'.

Young people feel safe and are protected by good safeguarding arrangements which are implemented in practice by knowledgeable staff. Staff and young people have positive relationships and they feel able to talk to staff if they have a concern.

A particular strength of the service is the manner in which young people are supported to develop the skills they will require to move smoothly into independent living. As a result young people grow in confidence and begin to take on increasing responsibility for their behaviours, for daily care tasks and for planning for the future.

Leadership and management arrangements are strong. The Registered Manager is extremely focused on service development and promotes consultation with young people as a key element within the culture of the home. While no detrimental impact on young people has been identified one requirement has been set in response to a

shortfall against regulation. This relates to management monitoring reporting. Two recommendations are also set in relation to placement planning documents and monitoring the use of emergency placements.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate up to eight young people with emotional and/or behaviour difficulties. The home is run by the local authority.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
24/03/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
09/01/2014	Full	good
03/12/2012	Interim	good progress
14/08/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
34 (2001)	ensure that a report showing management monitoring in-line with schedule 6 is provided to HMCI at least every three months (Regulation 34 (1a)(1b) and (2))	12/12/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular this relates to the need

to ensure that placement planning clarifies the detail in each area of care as to how the service will meet identified needs (NMS 21.1)

- ensure that there are clear and effective procedures for monitoring and controlling the activities of the home. In particular this relates to the need to keep under review the operation of the bed used only for emergency placements including an assessment of the impact on longer term residents (NMS 21.1)

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make good progress across each area of their development as a result of their placements in this home. Young people recognise that they have developed in self-confidence and have become more independent because of the support and care that they receive. It is evident that young people develop improved emotional resilience and a more positive self view. For example, individuals confidently representing other young people in care during county forums. Also, individuals making notable improvement with behaviours and beginning to accept and act on the good advice and guidance given by the staff team. The individual support provided also enables young people to begin to reflect on and understand their personal histories.

Young people's health is generally good. While some young people continue to smoke, they are provided with health education and support to reduce their habit by a health professional who visits the home. Dependent on age and development young people take on an increasing level of responsibility for their own health. For example, older residents make their own health appointments and make firm decisions about their own health. Young people demonstrate a good understanding of how best to maintain a healthy lifestyle. For example, they understand the importance of physical activity and following a healthy diet. Emotional wellbeing is monitored closely by the staff team and when required external support from mental health professionals is accessed.

Risk-taking behaviours decrease. There are no patterns of criminal activities, drug or alcohol misuse, or of young people going missing from the home. Where relevant there is a reduction in verbal and physical aggression. This is because of the high quality individualised care provided and the ability of the team to set firm boundaries.

Young people are able to maintain relationships with family members and individuals who are important to them. Contact is well-planned and any restriction is based on agreements with placing social workers and the reason is explained clearly to the young people. Staff proactively support young people to develop and maintain positive social relationships and welcome opportunities to meet young people's friends.

Young people's opinions are seen as key within care arrangements. Views are gathered during one-to-one time, house meetings and reviews and are captured within individual records on a daily basis. Feedback from young people about the care they receive is actively sought and used to inform service development and to support the smooth running of the home. For example, a recent decision was made to reduce the impact of loud music on others by purchasing headphones. As a result young people feel confident that their views about day-to-day living arrangements are

valued and will be acted upon.

Young people take part in a broad range of leisure and social activities. Examples include, group and individual holidays. They participate in sporting activities which they enjoy and which additionally promote healthy living. They visit the local gym, play football in the community and some engage in competitive sports. Young people contribute within their wider community. For example, several young people have been supported to undertake voluntary work. As a result young people begin to develop an improved social awareness.

The educational attendance and achievement of young people is good and for some young people is excellent. Examples of progress include young people with very poor records of attendance at the time of admission now fulfilling 100% attendance. Additionally, young people have passed, and others are predicted to pass, GCSE exams at grades A-C. As a result some young people now have very focused plans for further education and career choices based on positive educational outcomes. When young people are not in a full GCSE programme of education the home works collaboratively with educational professionals to progress individual plans and promote positive outcomes in relation to education and personal development.

The opportunities and outcomes for young people working towards living more independently are particularly good. Involved professionals talk positively about the quality of work undertaken in this regard. Comments included, 'They are quite excellent when young people do semi-independence work'. There is a semi-independent flat which supports young people to make the final transition into independent living while still receiving support from the staff team. The facilities in the home have been developed to provide young people with their own kitchen/dining environment where they store, cook and eat their own food. Young people learn about the process of applying for and retaining paid employment. As a result young people have well developed skills which will assist them when moving into adulthood.

Quality of care

good

The home is a purpose built detached dwelling situated within easy reach of community resources. The facilities provide young people with a welcoming and comfortable home which is well-maintained, decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and are involved in choosing the décor of communal areas. A recent addition to facilities is the adaption of what was an unused garage space into an educational resource. As a result young people who do not have a full time programme or need a quiet space to study now have an area away from the main living environment. The large rear garden to the home provides space for relaxation and sports. Additionally a small vegetable patch has been developed by staff and young people.

Individual differences are valued and staff have an excellent understanding of the diverse needs of what is quite a large group of residents. Young people are encouraged to develop their personal interests and to maintain social links which support individual needs. For example, community links which promote young people's culture and religion. As a result young people develop and maintain a strong sense of personal identity.

Many very positive comments are made by young people about the quality of care that they receive including, 'They have been amazing and have helped me through everything' and 'it is alright here because I like to have lots of staff to talk to and to respond to me. There is always someone I get on with'. To reflect the views of all young people some less positive comments were made which highlights that at times some feel their views are not always heard. On balance this is in the minority of cases and is primarily linked to issues outside of the control of the service. For example, views about necessary contact restrictions. Young people have strong relationships with the staff team and each say that they have identified particular staff as being very important to them. This demonstrates that young people are supported to build attachments with those caring for them in what are for most long-term placements.

Individual placement planning documents are found to set out comprehensive background information and to reflect progress made to date. However, in some cases, areas of identified need are found to lack clarity about how the service will meet the specific areas of need. While this is not linked to any identified poor outcomes for young people, this does raise the potential for needs to go unmet and a recommendation has been set in this regard.

Staff plan well to ensure that young people attended routine checks with health professionals such as dental appointments. The team work effectively with external health professionals to meet more specific needs. For example, a smoking cessation practitioner and mental health professionals. Young people's health needs are supported by a safe and well-managed system for the storage and administration of medication.

Staff ensure that young people are aware of the complaints process and know how to raise either a formal complaint or a more low key concern. They are confident that their concerns will be taken seriously and will be responded to.

Staff have high aspirations for the young people in their care and actively promote attendance at school or college. Attendance is good within each individualised education programme. The daily routine of the home encourages young people to have a good night's sleep before each school day and to spend additional time on educational activities or homework. As a result young people learn to prioritise their education and to understand that additional work can improve educational achievement.

Keeping children and young people safe good

Young people's protection is underpinned by the provision of a safe living environment. Health and safety is prioritised and arrangements ensure that young people understand the actions to be taken should a fire occur in the home.

Safeguarding concerns are recognised and reported promptly by staff who have a clear understanding about their role in the protection of young people. Allegations which reflect on staff practice are reported to the appropriate officer in the local authority. Learning points identified through safeguarding investigations are acted upon to inform staff or service development.

Young people feel safe living at this home and confirm that if they felt upset or anxious that they feel comfortable seeking support. The staff team are very knowledgeable about each young person's specific vulnerabilities. Staff monitor young people closely and are aware of the possible triggers which may result in young people leaving the home without consent. Training underpins practice and ensures that staff are aware of the risks to young people from using the internet and the possibilities for sexual exploitation. Young people are educated about risks and protective behaviours during one-to-one time with staff. This is further supported by each young person undertaking an awareness raising session delivered using a modern technology 'App' produced by Barnardos. As a result young people have an improved understanding of how best to keep themselves safe.

The service has well established recruitment procedures. Required and recommended areas of background checks are implemented in practice. The identity of visitors to the home is checked and a record of visits maintained. As a result young people are protected from unsuitable persons gaining access to the home.

Behaviour is well managed and as a result young people begin to make changes which enhance their social development. Staff set consistent and firm boundaries and as a result young people know what is expected of them. Young people say that there is no bullying, confirming that when there is conflict between young people staff step in quickly to resolve the issues. There has been a reduction in challenging and aggressive behaviours and there have been no episodes of young people being deemed formally missing from the home since the last inspection. Staff are proactive in working to secure the safe and prompt return of young people who fail to return on time or go absent for a period without consent. Strong relationships and positive reinforcement are embedded in the culture of behaviour management. Sanctions are used sparingly and appropriately to promote required changes to behaviour. Staff understand that physical intervention is a last resort and is used only for safeguarding reasons. Parents talk positively about the way behaviour is managed. Comments include 'I feel that they manage very difficult behaviours well'.

Leadership and management

good

The service is effectively managed by a very experienced and appropriately qualified Registered Manager who has held this position since January 2013. While already appropriately qualified the Registered Manager has now commenced additional training at level 5, which evidences a commitment to personal development. Staff are confident in the management team and confirm that support is readily available to them. Young people also talk positively about the manager. Comments include 'The manager is really good, if you ask something he always sorts it out, he always listens'. This demonstrates that young people are confident in the leadership and management of the home.

The Registered Manager is committed to the continuous improvement of the service. Recent developments include the improved education room referred to previously in this report. Additionally there have been recent alterations to the garden which provides additional scope for ball games and a new seating area in response to suggestions from staff and young people. Staff speak positively about the manner in which the home maintains focus on improvement. Comments included, 'The home continually strives to improve the services we provide'. Since the last inspection in March 2014 action has been taken to improve the areas of care identified for development at that time. Staff recruitment records are found to fully demonstrate that required checks have been undertaken prior to new staff commencing work in the home or for individuals having regular contact with young people. Also, risk assessments and placement plans are now found to be updated promptly as, and when, needs change. Managers now undertake a structured impact risk assessment in response to new referrals to the home. As a result decisions to accept placements are well-informed and are balanced against individual and group needs. However, this is not seen as fully practical to use for the one emergency bed operated within the home. The management team review referral paperwork for these placements before making a decision about suitability. Some young people made a point during this inspection of raising their view that these placements are sometimes unsettling and disruptive. The manager had been made aware of these views directly and had already responded to the young people concerned. Other young people say that staff manage these placements well. A recommendation has been set within this report to develop a process to review the impact of emergency placements on young people in long term placements and act accordingly to reduce detrimental situations.

Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and understand the required service provision as set out in the home's Statement of Purpose. Staff training is prioritised by the local authority operating this home. Induction training and development is structured across the first six months of employment. Staff then progress to undertake level 3 training. This training has recently been further developed to incorporate a module on Social Pedagogy in support of the ethos of the home. Core training incorporates safeguarding children and areas of health and safety, including food hygiene and fire safety. Additionally, the team has developed staff as trainers in the adopted behaviour management strategies, which incorporates

the use of physical intervention. Refresher training is provided at appropriate intervals. Staff confirm that they feel training is appropriate and effective.

The quality of care provided is monitored by the Registered Manager and also during monthly visits to the home made by an independent person. Reports produced by the independent person clearly set out the strengths of the service and also areas identified for further improvement, which are acted upon promptly by the management team. Internal management monitoring and understanding of the home's strengths and weaknesses is viewed as strong. However, reports submitted to Ofsted are not received at the frequency required by regulation and reporting has been slow to evolve to incorporate new areas clarified in regulations amended in April 2014.

Young people's files are well organised, contain the relevant historical information to inform effective placement planning and provide a good account of young people's time at the home.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.