

Children's homes - interim inspection

Inspection date	23/03/2016
Unique reference number	SC035352
Type of inspection	Interim
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	Abigail Marsden-Findlay
Registered manager	Timothy Morrison
Inspector	Cathey Moriarty

Inspection date	23/03/2016
Previous inspection judgement	Good
Enforcement action since last inspection	None
This inspection	
The effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection	
<p>This home was judged good at the full inspection. At this interim inspection Ofsted judge that it has sustained effectiveness.</p> <p>Young people in this home continue to make good progress from their starting points; they benefit from a nurturing environment where they can develop independence skills with support. A member of staff said: 'I think there is a calm relaxed atmosphere that the young people respond to. Staff want the young people to look forward to their future and are committed to supporting them to be able to live independently and be safe.' However, there are some areas of practice that require strengthening.</p> <p>Some of the young people have struggled to sustain engagement in employment training or education. When a young person leaves training or employment, staff immediately request an education planning meeting to consider options and try to maintain motivation and aspiration. For some young people this has been effective and they have gone on to further education or apprenticeships with only a limited break. However, some have not been receptive to support offered and they have been slow to take up opportunities. In these circumstances staff continue to ensure there are daily routines in place, provide advice and guidance, and try to identify what the blocks may be. This area of practice would be further developed by ensuring staff receive training to enhance their skills in supporting young people who may lack motivation and confidence. An education plan does not evidence aspirational targets. Staff require guidance and support to enable them to contribute effectively to education planning meetings.</p> <p>Although the home's response to incidents of bullying is effective, the recording of this requires improvement so that managers can monitor the impact of bullying behaviours on the well-being of young people.</p> <p>There has been a robust investigation into a safeguarding concern. Although managers are still in the process of responding to the findings, there are no concerns about the safety and welfare of young people at this time.</p> <p>New admissions to the home are well planned. Managers and staff carefully review compatibility and known risks, to limit the potential for any critical impact to the home's residents. Staff work closely with the professionals, families and services</p>	

within the young person's network to ensure that needs are known and understood. A young person said: 'I like living here. Staff are helpful, I am learning to look after myself, staff listen to me if I am worried about anything.'

Managers have developed the placement plan as a 'plan for action'. It is a useful tool in supporting ongoing assessment and includes evidence of progress made. It incorporates comprehensive risk assessment and behaviour management advice to support young people to manage and reduce any risky behaviours or vulnerabilities. As a result of key working sessions with the young person, and effective multi-agency working, there are low and reducing numbers of missing young people, unauthorised absence, physical interventions and reportable incidents. Staff understand safeguarding policies and fully adhere to procedures.

There is good, established, partnership working. The manager and staff work closely with case responsible social workers and regularly share information about each young person's progress. Managers are proactive in requesting multi-agency meetings if there are emerging or increased risks.

A staff member has responsibility for family liaison and has been very successful in supporting young people to see their extended family and significant others, particularly where there have been difficulties in relationships. Young people's views are listened to and, as a result of positive contact arrangements, their emotional well-being and self-esteem has been enhanced.

Staff and managers are in the process of developing independence skills work-books that cover a range of topics, and will chart the progress young people are making. This is likely to assist staff and other agencies to assess progress made and provide helpful evidence for young people to share with providers of accommodation in the future.

A shortfall noted at the last inspection in respect of maintaining supervision records has been addressed and records have significantly improved.

The manager always responds to any issues raised by young people and there is good evidence of suggestions effecting positive change within the home. A number of effective quality assurance mechanisms are in place. The staff group respond positively to any recommendations made by the independent visitor. The management team undertake monthly audits to evaluate the progress of young people. A recent development is 'voice of the child meetings'. These are regular meetings between the assistant manager, young people and their keyworkers. These are opportunities for each young person to reflect on progress and raise any concerns.

One young person said: 'The staff in this home have done so much for me -when I first came it made me realise how much I was not ready to live on my own without support, but I have grown so much here with staff helping me.'

Information about this children's home

This is a local authority children's home. It is registered to care for up to eight young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
07/10/2015	Full	Good
05/03/2015	Interim	Improved effectiveness
06/11/2014	Full	Good
24/03/2014	Interim	Satisfactory Progress

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

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the service should take account of the following recommendations:

The registered person should support staff to be ambitious for every child in the home and to gain skills and experience that enable them to actively support each child to achieve their potential. This is with specific reference to ensuring staff receive guidance in motivating young people to sustain training or employment opportunities, and in supporting the development of aspirational education plans. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 52, paragraph 10.5)

Registered persons must ensure that procedures for dealing with allegations of bullying are in place. This is with specific reference to staff recording all of the relevant information about a bullying incident, including how the incident has been responded to and managed. (The Guide to the Quality Standards, page 39, paragraph 8.16)

What the inspection judgements mean

At the interim inspection we make a judgement on whether the home has improved in effectiveness, sustained effectiveness, or declined in effectiveness since the previous full inspection. This is in line with the *Inspection of children's homes: framework for inspection*.

Information about this inspection

Inspectors have looked closely at the experiences and progress of children and young people living in the children's home. Inspectors considered the quality of work and the difference adults make to the lives of children and young people. They read case files, watched how professional staff work with children, young people and each other and discussed the effectiveness of help and care given to children and young people. Wherever possible, they talked to children, young people and their families. In addition the inspectors have tried to understand what the children's home knows about how well it is performing, how well it is doing and what difference it is making for the children and young people who it is trying to help, protect and look after.

This inspection focused on the effectiveness of the home and the progress and experiences of children and young people since the most recent full inspection.

This 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 Children's Homes (England) Regulations 2015 and the *Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards*.

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