

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 privately run children's home is registered to care for up to four young people, of either sex, aged from 11 to 17 years old. It is registered to care for young people whose primary needs arise from emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The house is made up of three floors. The ground floor comprises a bedroom, a shower room with toilet and a combined kitchen and dining area. On the first floor, there is a communal lounge, the staff office and the manager's office. These offices also serve as staff sleep-in rooms. On the upper floor, there are two en-suite bedrooms. Separate to the house, across the rear yard, is an independent bedsit annexe with bedroom, kitchen and toilet. The home does not have a garden.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced, full inspection and so all the key national minimum standards (NMS) were assessed. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the four requirements and four recommendations made at the previous inspection on 7 May 2010. These were about notifying Ofsted of significant events, risk assessments, recruitment procedures, insurance, and child protection procedures.

At the time of the inspection, the children's home was providing care and accommodation for four young people. One of the young people was present during the inspection and the inspector spoke to them about the care they receive. All four young people completed written surveys about the quality of care at the children's home. Four member of staff also submitted surveys.

Although the overall rating of outcomes is satisfactory, there are several areas where outcomes are good. However, several requirements and recommendations associated with the promotion of young people's safety and the organisational arrangements of the home have been made and this has affected the overall rating.

Nevertheless the Registered Manager and staff are effective at promoting the health of young people and their education. The home is well maintained, well furnished and clean and tidy. The Registered Manager and staff are a close-knit team and they provide consistent care through positive relationships with the young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

Ofsted are now able to monitor significant events better because the Registered Manager and staff inform the regulator when any relevant issues arise. Outcomes for safety have also improved since the previous inspection. For example, risk assessments are up to date and accurate, the risk of each young person being bullied or bullying others is fully assessed and recruitment decisions are recorded appropriately.

However, the registered persons do not check that all staff have provided a full employment history before a recruitment decision is made. Consequently, a requirement made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The Registered Manager and staff are effective at promoting healthy outcomes for young people. The staff and young people devise a menu each week and the staff receive training in food hygiene. However, there are concerns that young people are not eating a nutritious diet because vegetables do not appear on the menu very often.

The staff enable young people to register with local health professionals soon after admission to the home. They also receive an annual medical from a nurse with special responsibility for looked after children. This person also calls at the home regularly to give advice and literature to the staff and young people. The staff also give advice to young people regarding personal, health, social and sex and relationship education.

The staff record the administration of all medication in a clear and comprehensive manner and this provides for full accountability. Medication is stored securely and the staff receive appropriate training in the administration of first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The arrangements in place to ensure young people's safety are sound.

The Registered Manager and staff are aware of the importance of promoting young people's need for privacy. For example, when staff are first recruited to work in the home they must sign to confirm they will keep to the home's confidentiality policy. Young people can also make and receive telephone calls in private without asking the staff.

The staff enable young people to raise concerns informally and formally. A formal complaints procedure is in place which the Registered Manager is currently

reviewing. Young people are fully informed about how to raise concerns with external agencies, such as their placing authority, Childline, Ofsted and advocacy services. Nobody has made a formal complaint for over two years.

The staff know and understand how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. They receive regular training about child protection from a member of the Local Safeguarding Children Board and this is consolidated by further training online .

All young people said in their surveys that there was no bullying in the home. The staff assess the risk of bullying comprehensively and a good staffing level and appropriate admission procedures helps to ensure bullying is not a problem. Young people also very rarely go missing from the children's home although appropriate procedures are in place should this happen.

The Registered Manager and staff are effective at promoting positive behaviour. They rarely use sanctions and young people said that any sanctions that are used are fair. Similarly the staff rarely need to use physical intervention. However, they are aware of when it is appropriate to use such measures and they receive annual training about responding to challenging behaviour. Appropriate recording formats are in place for describing the use of any sanction or restraint.

The provision of bathroom and washing facilities is good. For example, three of the four young people have en suite facilities. However there is a lack of privacy in one bathroom because of the lack of a window covering.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Suitable checks and insurance are also in place for the home's vehicle which is used to transport young people. The staff conduct regular fire drills with young people. However there is a risk that young people are not fully prepared to respond in the event of a fire because in the last 12 months the staff have not conducted a fire drill when young people are expected to be asleep.

Despite a requirement made at the previous inspection, not all the required information is being kept about all staff working at the home. Specifically, the registered persons do not always seek a full employment history before choosing to recruit someone. This makes it more difficult to identify and account for absences in the history of anyone seeking to work at the home. Consequently a requirement made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The Registered Manager and staff fully support young people to enjoy and achieve in life. For example, they enable young people to follow their choice of leisure activities and hobbies, and to follow their choice of subjects at school.

None of the four young people who completed a survey could think of any way in which the home could be better and they all felt fully supported.

The Registered Manager and staff are also very effective at promoting educational outcomes. They work with placing authorities to establish appropriate education provision for each young person. They also support young people, once they have left secondary education, to find employment, college placements or further education opportunities. All four young people said the staff fully support them in their school and college work and that they have enough space and the right things to help them do this work. For example, each young person has a school desk in their bedroom and the home has a computer with internet access. The staff also record young people's attendance at school to establish patterns of progress.

Young people said that the staff enable them to take part in a wide range of activities. For example, one young person said 'I like to talk to my mates on the internet so the staff brought in a computer'. Other young people said they were fully supported to follow their own choice of hobbies, such as singing, dancing and fishing.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The Registered Manager and staff fully support young people to make positive contribution to the running of the home and to have a say in the content of their care plans. Each young person has two key workers and they ensure residential placement plans are kept up to date and in line with the statutory care plans.

Residential placement plans cover the range of young people's needs as recommended by the national minimum standards. Young people are always invited to attend their looked after children review meetings and the staff record the outcomes of these meetings immediately so that all can be aware of outcomes.

The arrangements for enabling young people to have regular contact with their friends and family are also good. For example, all young people said in their surveys that they were able to meet up and visit friends and their friends could visit them at the home. The staff also provide a lot of transport to help young people maintain contact with their families and friends.

The registered persons take a lot of care to ensure that they only admit young people to the children's home if they are sure they can meet their needs and that the needs of the current residents will not be unduly affected. This creates the foundations of a suitable mix of young people and it increases the likelihood of positive outcomes. The admission procedures are clear and well-established. However the registered persons do not record a confirmation that they can meet the needs of any new admission or that there is no foreseeable negative impact on the current residents. This slightly weakens what are otherwise very good procedures.

The staff give young people useful information about the home in the form of a 'welcome pack' when they first come to live there. One young person said in their survey that one of the best aspects of the care was that the staff had welcomed them into the home when they first moved in.

The Registered Manager and staff provide a lot of opportunities for young people to contribute to the running of the home. For example, they hold a house meeting once a month and the outcomes are fed into a staff meeting the next day. Each young person also has two key workers and they regularly spend one-to-one time with the young people. The key workers also encourage young people to complete a monthly consultation form and this system is effective at bringing about young people's reasonable expectations. The Registered Manager also seeks the views of parents about important issues.

The relationships between staff and young people are warm and supportive. For example, one young person who answered a survey said 'the best things about the home are that the staff are fun and they are a shoulder to cry on'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has an established leaving care procedure for those young people who are aged 16 and above and for whom their next move is likely to be into independent living. The home has a self-contained annexe at the rear of the premises, complete with washing machine, cooking facilities, toilet, shower and sleeping facilities. Written leaving care plans are in place with relevant targets for young people to achieve. The Registered Manager and staff liaise with placing authorities and leaving care teams to seek appropriate accommodation and to help young people to prepare and move on to independence.

The premises are well kept, clean and tidy. The staff have a list of environmental tasks to complete before they end their shift on a morning. Generally speaking the house is well maintained. However the downstairs bathroom does not have a toilet roll holder and the rear yard is poorly lit because the external lights do not work.

Facilities within the bedrooms are very good. For example, three of the four bedrooms are en-suite and all bedrooms have a desk and chair to help young people complete school or college work. All four young people who completed a survey said they were given opportunities to have a say in the general décor, furnishings and upkeep of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose and a children's guide for young people. However, these documents do not contain all the necessary information and

so are not fully useful to placing authorities or young people. For example, the Statement of Purpose does not describe the experience and qualifications of the registered persons and staff. In addition, the children's guide does not provide young people with the name and address of Ofsted.

Staff rotas are appropriate and provide a suitable level of cover to meet the needs of young people. The mixed gender team are able to deliver good levels of continuity. For example, there is minimal turnover and the registered persons have not employed agency staff for over two years. A deputy is in place to cover for any absence of the Registered Manager. They have suitable experience and are studying for a National Vocational Qualification at level four.

The staff receive appropriate training through a mix of online courses and training from people. New staff undertake induction training to the standards set by the Children's Workforce Development Council. Each member of staff discusses their training needs in regular supervision session with their line manager.

An external visitor conducts unannounced visits to the children's home once a month and reports on the quality of care provided. Although such visits assess most of the relevant issues, they are not fully robust because the visitor does not seek feedback from the parents of young people. There is therefore a risk that some shortfalls may not be identified in a timely manner. From time to time the home creates an annual development plan. However, there is not such a plan in place at the moment. This means the maintenance or development of the home's level of provision is unclear and therefore less assured.

The Registered Manager also monitors the quality of care every month. This monitoring covers all the necessary issues and they seek feedback from young people, parents and placing authorities. The registered provider also works in the home on a regular basis. However, although they attend most of the training alongside the other staff, they do not have a National Vocational Qualification at level three. Training at this level would mean they were qualified to the same standard as the rest of the team.

The Registered Manager and staff keep children's information securely. Young people can read their files, confidential information excepted, and they can add their own comments as appropriate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff team receive training in equality and diversity and they clearly aim to provide all young people with equal opportunities. For example, the staff help them to choose their own clothes, bedroom décor, activities, educational subjects and food. The staff protect them from the risk of bullying and they enable young people to have a say in the running of the home and in the content of their own care plans. The registered persons also carefully assess the needs of young people who are considered for admission to the children's home to ensure that their needs can be met and that their admission should not have any adverse impact on the current residents.

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	ensure full and satisfactory information is available for each member of staff including a full employment history with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (Regulation 26)(3)(d))	01/02/2011
1	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement (in these Regulations referred to as "the Statement of Purpose") which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in Schedule 1, in particular the qualifications and experience of the registered persons and the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the home (Regulation 4(1))	01/02/2011
1	ensure the children's guide contains the name and address of Ofsted (Regulation 4(3))	01/02/2011
32	ensure that, as appears necessary, the person conducting the external visits interviews, with their consent and in private, the children's parents and relatives in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home (Regulation 33(4)(a))	01/03/2011
34	ensure the registered provider from time to time undertakes such training as is appropriate to ensure that he has the experience and skills necessary for carrying on the children's home, in particular by completing the Level 3 Diploma for the Children and Young People's Workforce. (Regulation 9(2)(a))	01/12/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of menus (as served) demonstrate provision of a suitable diet, in particular in relation to the provision of fresh vegetables (NMS 10.4)
- ensure the downstairs shower/toilet is designed to take account of the children's needs for privacy, in particular by provision of an appropriate window covering (NMS 25.4)
- ensure that occasional fire drills take place at night, that is when young people are reasonably expected to be asleep (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that when a young person is admitted to the children's home, both the

needs of the young person concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents are recorded in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)

- ensure the home is maintained in good order throughout, in particular by ensuring the external lighting at the rear of the property is kept in working order and by providing a toilet roll holder in the downstairs bathroom (NMS 24.1)
- maintain a written development plan, reviewed annually, for the future of the home, either identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home, or confirming the continuation of the home's current operation and resourcing. (NMS 33.5)