

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michelle Oxley
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 home is a modern, semi-detached property, situated in a residential area within a village setting. The nearby town provides good access to a range of education, leisure, medical and transport services. The home provides a sitting room, kitchen and dining area, a family bathroom, the staff office/bedroom, a second staff bedroom and the young person's bedroom. There is an enclosed rear garden and available parking.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced key inspection is to assess the home's performance against key national minimum standards.

The service provides a good standard of care to young people with some outstanding features. Strengths include the support given to young people's educational attainment, sensitive admission and discharge processes and the commitment to developing care practices in relation to behaviour management.

Following this inspection three good practice recommendations are made. These concern amending the complaints policy, holding risk assessments on young people's files and ensuring staff are supervised within the timeframe set out in the national minimum standards.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection one good practice recommendation was made concerning continuity of staffing. Since the last inspection the Registered Manager has ensured that one of a core team of three staff is always on duty. This provides increased consistency for young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a healthy balanced diet. The food provided is plentiful and nutritious. The team keep a record of the food consumed in order to monitor overall nutrition. There is a good balance between healthy eating and occasional junk food. Meal times are sociable occasions with staff and young people sitting together.

There are robust practices in place to ensure that young people's health needs are met. Young people are routinely registered with essential health practitioners such as doctor, dentist and optician. Any further services that are identified are accessed. There is good record keeping concerning the outcome of all health-related appointments and future needs. Maintaining a healthy life style including promoting a healthy diet, exercise and ensuring good personal hygiene are well supported. Policy guidance around health promotion is in place.

There is suitable storage for the safekeeping of medication. An established system of recording and monitoring all medication coming in and out of the home and administered to young people is in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are respectful of young people's privacy. For example, young people have single rooms, bathrooms are fitted with privacy locks and young people are able to speak on the telephone in private. Staff ensure that young people have personal space by allowing uninterrupted time alone in rooms. There is guidance in place regarding privacy and confidentiality of information, known to staff.

There are systems in place to manage complaints made by young people and others. Young people are given information about how to complain in their welcome pack. In addition to this the home keeps a representations book where young people can write comments or concerns. Young people attend house meetings with staff which offer an additional opportunity for their complaints to be heard. The complaints policy is well written; however, it refers to an advocate who is no longer visiting the home.

The welfare of young people is protected and promoted by the home's safeguarding processes. Staff know how to pass on safeguarding concerns and receive regular child protection training. The team have access to up to date local area procedures as well as the home's own written procedure.

A good series of risk assessments are in place to protect young people. These include the health and safety of the building and trips out. They also include risk assessments related to individual young people; these relate to specific behaviours and set out how staff are to respond in order to prevent risk. All risk assessments are filed together in a dedicated folder. Young people's individual risk assessments are not held on their files where they would be more accessible to staff and link directly to young people's placement plans.

The home's procedures protect young people from bullying. Risk assessments regarding bullying are in place. The placement plan sets out effective strategies to avoid and deal with bullying. The effectiveness of the team's approach is examined at weekly house meetings.

There are systems in place to protect young people who are absent from the home without authority. There have been no incidents of absence since before the last inspection. Individual procedures are in place should this occur and there is overall policy guidance for staff to follow.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially acceptable manner. Behaviour is well managed through a set of pre-defined approaches set out in the behaviour management guidelines. The team deals sensitively with incidents, and relations between staff and young people are respectful. A set of incentives are used to encourage and reward positive behaviour. Sanctions appropriate and proportionate to the incident are well recorded. Physical interventions are used at the home and staff have received training specific to young people's behaviours. Consideration has been given to the health implications of using restraint. A reflective approach to the use of restraint is taken with the team examining the effectiveness of their approach. This is positive as it may serve to reduce the overall level of physical interventions used.

There are good health, safety and security procedures in place. These ensure young people are protected from harm. They include gas and electrical safety checks, fire safety risk assessment and checks of fire safety equipments. A system of vetting visitors to the home and a visitors'

book are in place. Staff are checked and vetted in line with national minimum standards including obtaining a Criminal Records Bureau check before they start work.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive good individual support in line with their needs. For example, needs and aims specific to individuals are set out in the placement plan and reviewed for progress on a weekly basis. Specialist external agencies are sought in order to gain support with particular assessed needs. The team excel in their provision for individual care, particularly in relation to the support given at school.

The team provides excellent support to assist young people to achieve at school. The staff team work in close conjunction with school staff. Care staff act as teaching assistants throughout the school day, transport is provided for young people to and from school. Staff attend parents' evening. Young people are encouraged and supported with schoolwork at home including preparation for exams.

Young people are encouraged to participate in a good range of leisure activities in line with their age and interests and in conjunction with their placement plan. Activities currently on offer include bike riding, fishing, going to the park and swimming. Risk assessments are in place for activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The level of information provided through the planning and assessment processes is very good. These reflect young people's needs well and direct staff in how to care for young people. Care needs are reviewed weekly. Staff use weekly meetings to reflect on their practice in order to develop their approach to meet young people's needs more effectively. The outcome of looked after children reviews are integrated into the home's plan. The system of placement planning is currently being developed in order to reduce duplication of information.

The arrangements for moving in and leaving the home are excellent. Young people move in and leave in a planned way. There is good evidence that the team work in conjunction with other services and social workers to ensure a smooth transition. The team are sensitive to the potential for emotional harm due to placement moves. They act sensitively providing emotional and practical support. Young people are involved as much as possible in the planning process and where appropriate, the team arrange to stay in contact with young people who move on.

Young people and significant others are able to influence the day to day operations of the home. The team take a collaborative and consultative approach to care. Young people are encouraged to air their views and a number of systems are in place to enable them to do so. For instance, young people are involved in weekly house meetings, a representations book is in place and young people have access to the responsible individual. There are good lines of communication between staff at the home and other professionals who are consulted on a regular basis about young people's care.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The team help young people to develop skills for daily living. Young people receive assistance and are encouraged to develop skills in line with their age and abilities. For example, young people are encouraged to help with household chores such as helping with the meal and clearing away dishes. Support is given to develop independence in personal care and personal presentation.

The house provides a comfortable homely environment for young people. Young people have single room accommodation which they can personalise. Communal areas are well decorated, clean and comfortable throughout. They are furnished with modern comfortable furniture and fittings. Attention is paid to homely touches such as ornaments and photographs of young people. Outside there is an enclosed garden, just big enough for bike riding and ball games.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose is available to placing authorities and families. The document accurately reflects the service provided.

Staffing levels are usually one to one but these can be adjusted in line with young people's needs and agreements with placing authorities. There is a core staff team of three long term team members who provide consistency of care for young people. Attempts have been made to extend the core team but this has been hampered by illness. Other team members work across other homes within the organisation.

An ongoing programme of staff training is in place to ensure that staff are provided with mandatory training. Additional training is also provided where there is an identified need. The training programme includes first aid, physical interventions, safeguarding, fire awareness and dealing with self-harm.

Staff receive support from the Registered Manager through the supervision process. The manager aims to supervise staff every month in line with the national minimum standards. However, there has been some slippage, mostly due to pressures of staffing but also due to staff working across different homes within the organisation, which potentially makes the supervision process more complex than it need be.

The home is routinely and regularly monitored in order to assess performance. Monthly regulation 33 visits are made to the home and the Registered Manager monitors the home against a checklist. There is good evidence of monitoring records effectively in order to improve care practices.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Policy guidance is available to staff. The team are aware of issues that may impact upon young people in their care and work in a way which promotes equality of opportunity. For example, the team supports young people's educational attainment exceptionally well. They ensure that young people are able to access mainstream leisure and other facilities within the community.

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 meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that young people's individual risk assessments are held on their files (NMS 26)
- remove the reference to the advocate who is no longer visiting the home from the complaints procedure (NMS 16)
- ensure that staff receive supervision within the timeframe stated in the standards. (NMS 28)