

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of inspection	Random

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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 home is registered to provide care for four young people, of either sex, between the ages of 8 and 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides medium- to long-term residential care and is owned by a private company. The home is located in a residential area that has easy access to local facilities and public transport. The house consists of a lounge, large kitchen-diner, bathroom and staff office on the ground floor. There are four young people's bedrooms, and bathroom on the first floor. There are gardens to the front and rear of the house.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

A random inspection was conducted of this service. There were no outstanding actions or recommendations following the last inspection. All the key standards in staying safe were inspected and a brief tour of the premises conducted.

This inspection found that young people benefit from living in a home that is domestic in style and is decorated, furnished and equipped to an exceptionally high standard. Staff and young people invest a lot of time and effort in constantly maintaining and improving the facilities. The safety of young people is a priority. Positive reinforcement of good behaviour helps staff to develop meaningful relationships with young people. Physical restraint is seldom used and sanctions are proportionate to the misdemeanour committed. Staff work well at helping young people to address and reduce their absconding behaviour. While the home has taken its own minutes these do not effectively show how the risk is being shared with the responsible placing authority and whether a contingency plan has been identified.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made following the previous inspection of the home in February 2010. The home has, however, continued to improve the decorative appearance of the home and improved the facilities that young people have access to.

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 are given keys to their bedrooms so that they lock their doors and keep their possessions safe. There is a relaxed, trusting atmosphere in the home and some young people choose not to lock their bedrooms all the time. Should issues arise, staff educate young people about how to keep their possessions safe. Young people say that staff respect their privacy and do not enter rooms without knocking and waiting for permission to answer. Care is taken to store confidential information held on young people within lockable, secure provision.

There is a strong emphasis on informing young people of their rights and, in particular, about how they can raise concerns and complaints. Young people are routinely asked if they have any complaints during the weekly house meeting. Staff make sure that young people always have a copy of the complaints procedure in their bedrooms together with an envelope addressed to the responsible individual. As a result, young people are empowered to make complaints directly to someone who does not routinely work in the home. Some young people report having used this procedure to raise concerns and have found it to be an effective way of being heard. Additional copies of the complaints procedure are located at strategic points in the home for young people to refer to.

Young people also receive a lot of verbal and written guidance on anti-bullying. Information is again displayed in communal areas of the home to capture the attention of young people to the issues involved. Young people are informed about how to recognise bullying, its potential impact on victims and what to do to prevent it from occurring. Dynamics between young people living in the home have not always been easy but staff are alert to the potential of bullying and intervene quickly to identify resolutions should it occur.

Staff are trained in how to manage allegations or suspicions of abuse. They complete training in safeguarding and child protection during their induction period. Regular updates, provided by the Registered Manager during staff meetings, ensure that staff remain up to date and fully aware of reporting procedures. Copies of procedures and policies are available for them to refer to in the home if wanting clarification about the action to take.

A protocol is in place to protect young people when they are absent from the home without permission. Staff are familiar with the guidance and know the action to take, taking into account the different ages and risk factors involved. A dedicated record, in which a note is made of all incidents of absconding, enables effective monitoring of any recurring patterns. There have been a significant number of incidents of absconding, but the home has worked effectively to a comprehensive placement plan to reduce these. Good practice is evident with the home initiating joint meetings between themselves, the responsible social worker and the police to identify strategies for working with the young people concerned. Failure, however, by the responsible placing authority to provide copies of minutes from two statutory reviews

means it is not possible to establish whether the independent reviewing officer is satisfied with the action being taken by the home. It is also not evident whether any consideration has been given to the point at which the threshold of risk becomes too great for the home to manage or if a contingency plan has been identified. While good practice is evident with the home has maintained its own minutes of the meetings, these do not cover these matters.

The organisation has invested in training staff in conflict resolution and has achieved accreditation with the British Institute for Learning Disabilities (BILD). The emphasis on using de-escalation techniques to avoid the use of physical intervention is successful. There have been only a few occasions when physical restraint has been used since the previous inspection in February 2010 and each of these was appropriate. The focus on establishing positive, meaningful relationships with young people and delivering a consistent message about acceptable and unacceptable behaviour is also used successfully to limit the need for sanctions. Records kept of sanctions show a significant increase during the summer months. These sanctions are largely accounted for by new admissions of young people who had a history of significant absconding behaviour. The home has worked proactively to reduce the frequency of absconding behaviour and the number of associated sanctions. Young people are happy living in the home and say that the staff 'are great'. Some young people also report that the home has helped them to turn their lives around.

Well-established systems are in place to manage environmental risks posed to children. There is routine maintenance and servicing of equipment. Fire alarms and evacuation procedures are completed at the frequency recommended by the local fire officer.

Robust systems are also in place for assessing the suitability of staff to work with children. Confirmation of the checks completed on each member of staff is sought and retained at the home each time a new member of staff is employed.

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 outstanding.

The home provides an excellent standard of accommodation. the pride that the staff and young people take is evident in the clean and tidy surroundings. All areas of the home show an investment of time and money. Staff and young people work together to plan the colour scheme and decorate it themselves. Furnishings are sturdy and of good quality. Young people have a choice in how they would like their bedrooms to be decorated and are able to choose some of the soft furnishings. This approach helps them to settle quickly into the home and develop an appreciation of their surroundings.

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
35	ensure that a record of each statutory review is available on children's files. (Refers to requesting a copy of minutes of statutory reviews from placing authorities when they fail to forward them and ensuring that discussions concerning persistent absconding are recorded within the minutes together with the agreed threshold of permitted risk and a contingency plan). (Regulation 28 Schedule 3)	31/12/2010