

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 is a registered service to accommodate a maximum of eight young people aged between 13 and 17 years. The young people accommodated are male only. The home is privately run and is one of two children's homes registered to the service providers in the same county. The registered providers also operate another home in a nearby county. The home specialises in working with young people whose assessed needs are linked to sexually inappropriate behaviour. Young people engage in regular therapy which forms a key component of the therapeutic ethos of the setting. They are given an insight to these types of support during the initial stay, which lasts for up to 10 days.

The home is situated on the outskirts of a village with a range of facilities and amenities close by. Young people attend a school which is operated by the same organisation.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

The key inspection was announced and took place during a weekday. The school belonging to the organisation, which all young people attend, was also inspected by Ofsted at the same time. The setting is judged as outstanding overall. Two recommendations were made as a result of this inspection.

Young people receive a suitable diet with their views and wishes taken into consideration when meals are planned. An outstanding approach towards meeting the emotional needs of young people ensures they are provided with consistent and individualised programmes of support. Intensive intervention strategies are implemented which includes addressing the risks young people are to themselves or others. Safeguarding young people is a constant focus of work undertaken with young people with child protection practices contributing to the culture of safety across the organisation. Young people clearly feel safe and looked after. The manner in which young people have their individual needs addressed is excellent. Care planning and review processes are comprehensive with young people contributing their views throughout. The therapeutic nature of the setting ensures young people are enabled to express their views and feelings openly. Young people live in a good environment which is spacious and homely. The setting is excellently managed and clearly for the benefit of young people. Some minor improvements could be made to the recording of formal supervisions and routine managerial monitoring procedures. Staff are motivated, skilled and committed to providing consistently high standards of care.

All eight young people placed at the setting contributed to the preparation for this inspection, including meeting the inspector, showing him their room and inviting him to share their evening meal.

Improvements since the last inspection

One action was made at the last inspection in relation to ensuring a protocol is written to address periods when tradesmen are working at the home. A new risk assessment has been produced which clearly outlines the expectation placed on workmen including levels of supervision and their general behaviour.

Three recommendations were made at the last inspection. The first noted the need to update the procedure when young people leave the home without permission to ensure they are offered a chance to talk to their social worker or independent person on their return. This has now been completed and in the very few instances when young people have left the home without permission they have been offered a chance to talk with such people.

The second recommendation focused on needing to include more details when the term 'grounding' is used as a sanction. The sanction log was found to contain sufficient details with clear information about the nature of the sanction.

The final recommendation centred around the recording of fire drills, notably that the time when they took place should also be noted. The fire log confirmed that all fire drills are now recorded with the date and time when they occurred.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive a reasonable diet and are encouraged to consider eating healthily. The likes and dislikes of young people are taken into consideration when the menu is planned. Young people say meals are 'nice' and 'really good'. Mealtimes are an important part of the day with the whole living group expected to eat together.

The health care needs of young people are met well, while the approach toward meeting their emotional needs is outstanding. All young people are registered with local GP surgeries and dentists and are supported by staff to attend routine medical appointments. Health care plans highlight medical histories with details of immunisations, illnesses and current medication requirements. Health care plans were found to be up to date and accurate being reviewed monthly as part of the overall care planning review process. Each young person has consents in place for the giving of first aid, emergency treatment and the administration of medicines.

Young people have their emotional care needs met in an excellent manner. The emotional well-being of each young person is placed at the heart of care planning. All young people receive individual therapy and counselling on a weekly basis.

Therapists work very closely with care staff to ensure a consistent and therapeutic approach to addressing particular issues. This includes matters such as young people's self-esteem, anxieties or poor mental health. Young people are clearly aware that attending therapy sessions is an every day part of living at the setting and display considerable insight into why such intervention is necessary.

The storage and administration of medication is robust and safe. All medicines are stored within the office in secure medical cabinets. Staff are trained in the dispensing of medicines with records confirming that this is carried out accurately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Practice within the setting ensures that wherever possible the privacy of young people is respected. Young people have keys to their rooms, while staff were seen to knock before entering. All confidential information concerning young people is stored securely in the office. The searching of rooms only occurs when it is necessary to safeguard young people. Toilets and bathrooms offer sufficient privacy.

A robust complaints procedure is in place which is made known to young people as soon as they arrive both verbally and within the young person's guide. Details of how young people can complain are displayed openly around the home with information relating to independent advocacy services readily available. Young people felt they could express their views easily and talk to staff whenever they needed to. Complaints are dealt with swiftly and efficiently, though none have been made by young people since the last inspection and none have been received by Ofsted.

The approach taken with regard to child protection is outstanding. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place which are followed in practice. A culture of safety is promoted across the organisation whether within the home itself, the school or in the wider community. Staff receive child protection training and are extremely mindful of the risks young people may pose to each other or indeed themselves. Comprehensive risk assessments focus on the issues young people have with particular note of the risk of their inappropriate sexualised behaviours and individual vulnerabilities to abuse. Young people feel they are 'safe' and 'looked after'.

Young people are given excellent support and guidance to address inappropriate or risky behaviours. Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan which outlines their specific risks and how these may be limited. Young people are fully involved in compiling such plans and are provided with considerable support to think about how they can be helped to behave appropriately. Incentive plans assist young people to meet daily and weekly goals with individual progress against targets are seen as extremely positive amongst the young person group. A clear process is in place regarding the giving of sanctions which are well known by young people. Staff are encouraged to consider alternatives to the implementation of punitive sanctions with young people engaged to consider restorative ideas. For instance doing extra chores around the home.

The therapeutic nature of the setting ensures young people are constantly able to address their own behaviours and challenge that of others. Expectations of behaviour within the home are high but reasonable with young people aware of what the rules and boundaries are and why they are in place. Meetings can be called at short notice to address specific events or incidents with young people able to instigate them themselves. All young people attend the meetings and have opportunities to question the actions of each other. Each meeting is carefully facilitated by staff with young people encouraged to live together safely.

All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention though this is seldom required with no restraints recorded since the last inspection. The ethos of the home is to engage young people in dialogue and to seek alternatives to violent or destructive behaviour.

Behaviours such as being absent without authority are addressed appropriately with clear protocols in place to respond to such events. Close liaison with the local police ensures young people have their particular risks or vulnerabilities well known. The level of such behaviour is low with very swift actions taken to safeguard all parties when they do take place. Similarly a zero tolerance approach to negative peer behaviours such as bullying, coupled with good numbers of staff ensures incidents of this nature are rare. No young people raised concerns that they were being bullied. The atmosphere in the home clearly centres around encouraging mutual respect and understanding.

The health and safety of all those who live and work at the home are addressed well. The routine checking, testing and servicing of fire fighting and electrical equipment takes place at regular intervals. Fire alarm drills are carried out regularly with all young people and staff taking part. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to address the whole living environment.

A robust recruitment process ensures no members of staff work at the home unless all the required checks have been confirmed and considered.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their individual needs met in an excellent fashion. Consistently high levels of support are provided with key working playing a fundamental role in the service. Young people clearly engage in the process with staff providing them with care, support and guidance to match their individual circumstances. Young people spoke extremely positively about the support and care they receive. Staff clearly understand the particular needs of young people and have considerable expertise in working with their behaviours, attitudes and emotions.

Young people clearly benefit from support provided by staff with one-to-one work regularly occurring with their key workers. One-to-one sessions allow young people

the chance to address their own behaviours, feelings and thoughts. The holistic care approach also involves key workers attending the routine therapy sessions of young people thus adding to the intensive programmes of intervention and ensuring consistency and support.

An extremely positive learning culture encourages young people to engage in their education and training. The organisation provide in-house education on the site of one of their other settings some 20 minutes drive away. All young people attend the school and have personal education plans in place; attendance rates are continually high. Staff travel with young people each day, with at least two staff located at the school throughout the day. Such support ensures young people remain in school. Excellent communication between education and care staff promotes consistency both within education and intervention programmes.

Young people benefit from living in a home where activities occur routinely. Staff display a good level of motivation and enthusiasm which in turn encourages young people to participate in the things they enjoy or are interested in. Regular visits take place to local places of interest including the cinema and leisure centres. Trips are also undertaken to local theme parks and attractions with thoughtful planning ensuring such trips and activities are spread out and varied. During the school week many activities are based in or around the home with a multitude of card and board games taking place. The setting also have a small gym which offers young people the opportunity to exercise regularly. Despite the need to complete and consider robust risk assessments young people are not prevented from participating in meaningful activities within the local community. Young people felt there was 'lots to do' and clearly enjoyed the active participation of staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

No young person is admitted to the home until an assessment of need has been completed. Before young people move in fully they visit for a weeks assessment period to ensure they can have their needs met. This includes being able to engage in therapy and comprehend boundaries and rules. Group dynamics are considered in depth to ensure each young person admitted to the home can be integrated into the dynamics of the whole living group.

Assessments of young people are completed utilising the expertise and guidance of the organisations therapists, education assessors and care managers. Young people are themselves encouraged to participate in the development of their individual care plans. Care planning is holistic taking account of all relevant information regarding the physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of each individual young person. Care plans provide an excellent and comprehensive assessment and planning framework which cover every aspect of care provision. Such plans are completed under the Every Child Matters descriptors and clearly show what the individual needs of young people are and how they should be met and reviewed.

Young people have their care needs reviewed routinely. Reviews of care occur very regularly with a focus on the progress of the respective young person against their care plan. When changes occur in the lives, behaviour or circumstances of young people these are incorporated into care plans. Key workers complete monthly reports which provide a detailed overview of the young person in question. Being a specialised service, intervention strategies and programmes are reviewed intently to ensure plans to reduce inappropriate behaviours or thoughts are monitored with particular interest. Reports are provided for statutory looked after children reviews with young people being supported to attend and participate.

The particulars of any agreed contact arrangements are recorded in detail being clearly known by staff and the young person concerned. Risk assessments are completed for all aspects of contact and updated when and if necessary. Records are kept of every contact which provides a clear picture of the circumstance of visits and their outcome. Contacts are carefully managed with staff providing support and supervision when required.

Young people feel they are 'listened to' and have their views fully considered. The atmosphere within the setting is open and relaxed with young people clearly feeling comfortable to say what they feel. Formal house meetings take place each week with all young people expected to attend. Matters addressed include day-to-day issues such as activity planning but also offer a platform to discuss inappropriate behaviours or attitudes. In this respect young people can express any concerns or worries they have about each other in a safe and channelled manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The changing and developing needs of young people as they approach adulthood are met well. Staff provide advice, support and guidance for practical issues such as learning to cook, shop and budget. The home has developed their own life-skills programme which can be implemented when it is jointly agreed by the young person, staff and placing authorities. This occurs in addition to any pathway planning and thus provides a key assessment process to pathway plans when they are put in place. The organisation has another setting nearby which is set up to offer support and guidance for older young people and young adults. A number of young people will be expected to move on to this setting in the coming months and years.

The home provides young people with a comfortable and relaxed place to live within a homely environment. All areas of the home were found to be clean and in a reasonable condition inside and out. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms and do so with pictures and photographs. Communal areas offer young people sufficient space and comfort with all modern entertainment items being available. There is a large garden, mainly set to lawn, with a small gym within the grounds. Some areas were previously part of an on-site education facility and are in the process of being refurbished as they appear somewhat tired and worn. Recent

building works have already improved the environment for young people and staff alike with all work planned to be completed this year.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Comprehensive information is provided for young people and others which clearly describes the setting and the services it offers. The Statement of Purpose is up-to-date clearly outlining all aspects of care provision. Young people have their own guide which is easy to understand.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people play an integral and important role in contributing to the manner in which they are looked after. The individual needs of each young person are incorporated into the way they are cared for with their own views clearly considered. The staff team is made up of a good mix of gender, age and experience. Young people are seen as individuals who require intensive and specialised care but who also have their voice heard and acknowledged.

A good number of staff are on duty at any one time during the day and night. The staff team is very settled, consisting of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners who are committed in their work; agency staff are very rarely used. New staff undertake an induction programme which focuses on all key areas of care provision alongside supportive guidance from senior staff and their peers. All staff receive regular supervision and state they feel 'fantastically' supported and guided; one record of supervision did not detail why it had not taken place. Staff feel morale within the team is 'excellent' and 'supportive'. The whole staff team also receive group supervision with one of the organisations therapists twice a month which enables them to consider their own thoughts, feelings and emotions within a therapeutic framework. Staff practice was observed to be skilled and thoughtful with young people benefitting from a staff team who work closely together to meet the needs of young people in their care.

A sound programme ensures staff receive mandatory and specialised training. Alongside completing required courses such as national vocational qualifications staff are provided with focused training from the wealth of expertise within the organisation. This includes workshops run by the organisations therapists such as 'working in a specialist therapeutic community'.

The management approach in running the home is excellent. The setting is managed with the needs of young people as the paramount concern. The Registered Manager has a wealth of experience and leads the team with enthusiasm and knowledge. The Registered Manager and the deputy ensure all aspects of care are routinely monitored and reviewed, although a format for recording such checks is currently not in place. The organisation completes the required monthly monitoring inspections which are comprehensive, objective and self-evaluative.

All records seen which are required to be kept clearly reflect the progress and development of each young person placed at the setting, these being accurate and up to date.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- record the reasons when formal supervision has not occurred (NMS 28.3)
- consider developing a format for recording the Registered Manager's routine monitoring of care. (NMS 33.1)