

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley
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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 children's home provides care, education and accommodation for five male children between the ages of 11 to 17 years. The home accommodates children or young people who have emotional or behavioural difficulties or a learning disability. The home specialises in working with young people whose assessed needs are linked to sexually inappropriate behaviour. Young people are expected to engage in regular therapy sessions which form a key component of their placement. Young people attend school on site which is operated by the same organisation. The home is situated in a rural location. The accommodation comprises a living and dining room, a quiet room and a games room. Young people have their own bedrooms and have access to two bathrooms. The home has a front and back garden with grass areas suitable for the young people to either play games or grow plants. There is a gravel area which is used for parking vehicles belonging to the home.

Four young people were accommodated at the time of the inspection. All four young people engaged in the inspection and offered their views and opinions via questionnaires and talking with the inspector.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The key inspection was unannounced and took place during a weekday. The setting was judged as good overall. Three actions and one recommendation were made as a result of this inspection. Young people have their views and wishes taken into consideration when meals are planned including their cultural needs. An outstanding approach towards meeting the emotional needs of young people ensures they are provided with consistent and individualised programmes of support. A robust response to keeping young people safe is in place, although there is a need to train new staff more swiftly in regards physical intervention. The approach toward addressing negative or inappropriate behaviours is sound. However record keeping is not always consistent in relation to those occasions when young people leave the home without permission. 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 home's own in house review process is not always followed, for example, one section of a monthly review found to have been copied from the previous report. Young people are enabled to express their views and feelings openly. Young people live in a good environment which is spacious and homely, although the bathrooms have not been modernised and are dated in appearance. The home is managed well and clearly for the benefit of young people. Staff appear motivated, skilled and committed to providing consistently high standards of care and they say they are supported extremely well.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

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 who have specific cultural needs have these considered when meals are planned and prepared, such as halal meat.

The health care needs of young people are met extremely 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 are up to date and accurate. Each young person has consents in place for the giving of first aid, emergency treatment and the administration of medicines.

The emotional well-being of each young person is placed at the centre of care planning. All young people receive individual therapy on a weekly basis. Therapists work very closely with care staff to ensure a consistent approach to addressing particular issues. Therapists focus on matters associated with the potentially abusive behaviours, thoughts and attitudes of young people alongside addressing issues of poor self esteem and identity. Young people are clearly aware that attending therapy sessions is an every day part of living at the home. Refusal to engage in such intervention would place the young person's placement in some question.

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, and records confirm that this is carried out accurately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have their privacy respected. They have keys to their rooms, and staff 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 suitable complaints procedure is in place. This is made known to young people as soon as they arrive at the home, 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 feel they can express their views and talk to staff whenever they needed to. Complaints are dealt with swiftly and efficiently, although 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 robust. Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place, which are followed in practice. The safety and well-being of young people is promoted within the home and school. 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' living at the home.

Each young person has an individual behaviour management plan which outlines their specific risks and how these may be limited. Feedback from therapists helps to indentify the most appropriate way in which to assist young people to address their negative behaviours. Young people are encouraged to be involved in compiling such plans and are provided with considerable support to think about how they can be helped to behave appropriately.

Expectations of behaviour within the home are well known and reasonable. Young people aware of the rules and boundaries and why they are in place. Incentive plans assist young people to meet daily and weekly goals, and individual progress against targets are seen by the young people as extremely positive. A clear process is in place regarding the giving of sanctions which are well known by all.

A majority of staff are trained in the use of physical intervention although its use is not regularly applied. New staff sometimes have to wait several months before they receive the necessary training and are therefore not able to intervene when restraints are necessary. The Registered Manager is aware of this dilemma and arranges staffing accordingly. 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's particular risks or vulnerabilities are well known. The level of such behaviour is low and very swift actions are taken to safeguard all parties when they do occur. At such times, incidents are generally well recorded, although there is some discrepancy when incidents are not recorded at all, such as with those incidents which only last for a very short period of time. Similarly, a zero tolerance approach to negative peer behaviours such as bullying, coupled with good numbers of staff, ensure 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 speak extremely positively about the support and care they receive. Staff clearly understand the particular needs of young people and work hard to address and support 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. Liaison between therapists and care staff are close which ensures a consistent approach to implementing programmes of intervention and support.

An extremely positive learning culture encourages young people to engage in their education and training. The organisation provides in-house education on site. All young people attend the school and have personal education plans in place; attendance rates are continually high. Care staff work within school providing practical and emotional support to assist young people to stay focused. Excellent communication between education and care staff promotes consistency within education and care.

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 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. Despite the obvious need to complete and consider risk assessments young people are not prevented from participating in meaningful activities within the local community including being members of football teams.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

No young person is admitted to the home until an assessment of need has been completed. 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 resident group.

Assessments of young people are completed using the guidance of therapists, education assessors and the Registered Manager. Young people are themselves encouraged to participate in the development of their individual care plans. Care planning takes account of all relevant information regarding the physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of each individual young person. Care plans provide a good 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.

A very good standard of review reports are provided for statutory reviews of care which include the opinions of the young person concerned. Key-workers attend each review and make every effort to assist young people themselves to take part. Monthly review reports are also completed by key-workers and are generally very detailed in content. However one monthly review report has the conclusion section copied word for word from the previous months report, and therefore does not provide an accurate reflection.

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 thoughtfully managed with staff providing support and supervision when required.

In general, young people feel they are 'listened to' and have their views considered. The atmosphere within the setting is open, with young people clearly feeling comfortable to say what they feel. Formal house meetings take place each fortnight 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.

Staff respond well to the changing and developing needs of young people as they approach adulthood. Age appropriate advice, support and guidance is provided for practical issues such as learning to cook, shop and budget. The home has developed its 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 home provides young people with a comfortable and relaxed place to live. All areas of the home are clean and in a reasonable condition inside and out, with displays of pictures and photographs of outings and events adding to the generally homely atmosphere. 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. Bathing facilities are adequate to meet the needs of young people. However both bathrooms are extremely dated with baths, sinks and tiles in lurid colours which are not relaxing or suitable. The bathrooms, although offering the necessary amenities, do not match the homely and modern feel of the rest of the house.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Good information is provided for young people and others which details the home and the services it offers. All young people are given a copy of the young person's guide on moving into the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people have their likes and dislikes considered when meals are planned, whilst their emotional needs are met extremely well. Staff clearly understand the issues young people have and respond to them accordingly. Young people have their individual needs met in an excellent fashion with support and guidance provided to match their choices and wishes including their religious and cultural needs. Young people are able to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. While accepting the need for high levels of supervision, the culture of the home places the individual needs of young people first.

Staff receive considerable support and guidance to carry out their tasks. New and established staff members note that they feel encouraged and assisted by the Registered Manager, the senior team and their peers. Staff morale is good. Formal supervision occurs at the required levels with informal support evident in abundance.

Adequate numbers of staff are deployed to care for the young people during the day and night. There are currently several care staff vacancies. A recruitment drive is in

progress and it is hoped new staff will be appointed in the near future. Shortfalls in the rota are being covered by existing staff and the occasional use of staff from a nearby service belonging to the same organisation; due to the need for consistency, agency staff are seldom used. Young people are cared for by a staff team who are committed and suitably experienced. Staff receive very good induction and training and understand the particular needs of each young person in their care.

Since the last inspection the manager has been successful in their application to be registered with Ofsted as manager for the service. The Registered Manager has now held this position for almost a year and clearly provides a skilled and thoughtful approach to running the setting. The service is managed with strong leadership and guidance to the whole staff team. All aspects of the service are routinely monitored and reviewed, with the organisation completing the required monthly inspection visits. The management approach creates an atmosphere which is open, inclusive and caring.

Young people generally have their progress and development acknowledged through a good standard of record keeping and report writing, although these are not always rigorous.

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
22	ensure staff are provided with physical intervention training in good time in accordance with Regulation 27 (4) (a) (NMS 22.8)	07/02/2011
2	ensure in house reviews of care plans are accurate and in particular do not have their conclusions copied from previous reviews in accordance with Regulation 12 (2) (NMS 3.4)	07/02/2011
24	ensure both of the home's bathrooms used by young people are modernised to provide a homely and pleasant domestic environment in accordance with Regulation 31 (2) (c) (NMS 42.2)	03/03/2011

Recommendations

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

- consider implementing a more consistent approach to the recording of incidents when young people leave the home without permission (NMS 19.6)