

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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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

This service is a children's home. It provides up to four placements to young people aged 11 to 17 years. It is near to the bus route servicing local villages and the local town centre, which is approximately five miles away. In the local community there are shops, schools, health, leisure and employment facilities.

Summary

This was a key inspection to check on all key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for young people. This is a good service with some outstanding features. Young people eat healthily and their good health is well promoted. Privacy is well facilitated in all aspects. Complaints are handled well. There are good child protection policies, training and practices which help to safeguard the welfare of the young people. Staff are particularly good at making sure that young people are looked after in a way that is particular to how they are and want to be. Education and leisure needs are very well met, and the home works closely with other services to meet the range of young people's needs.

This is a notable area of outstanding strength. Placement planning is very good and it is exceptionally well recorded and reviewed. The facilitating of contact is good. Good support is in place now to help young people learn skills that they will need for later in life. Very good risk assessing and fire safety practices help to keep young people safe. Staff are experienced, very well trained and competent. Young people clearly benefit from the good leadership provided by the manager to a cohesive and adaptable team. There is very good monitoring to maintain and improve the quality of care in the home. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions raised at the last inspection.

The registered person was asked to make improvements to staff training. All staff are registered on an appropriate National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) course and they are given good support to complete it. However, the target of 80% of staff having achieved NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People is not yet met. Therefore this recommendation is carried forward.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make choices about their food. The staff are aware of individual young people's likes and dislikes to ensure that they enjoy the food served. The food served is both healthy and nutritious. Staff educate and encourage young people to eat healthy foods and snacks. The staff and young people have created a wall display which details healthy eating options. The staff have a good understanding of food hygiene. This is supported by all staff holding food hygiene training certificates. Any food matters that arise out of diversity, such as allergies, intolerance or cultural preference are particularly well managed. Themed food evenings are often used to expand the young people's tastes and knowledge of

different foods and cultures. Young people are involved in planning meals and shopping and have access to a well equipped kitchen where they often take part in preparing meals and baking. Therefore, young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their individual dietary needs. They also have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals.

Health promotion is a high priority at the home. The young people's health is closely monitored and record keeping is very good. Staff are trained in healthcare subjects. There is detailed written guidance for staff on a wide range of young people's health and medical matters, to make sure that they understand about young people's health and what their responsibilities are. An information area in the resource room has details of local health agencies that young people can access for advice and information. Healthcare records are up-to-date and accurate, enabling staff to change their ways of working or inform health professionals and parents of the children's health progress.

The young people feel confident to speak to the staff about general and personal health matters. Specialist health workers are involved where appropriate. The home has established strong links with a variety of specialist health services, and there is much evidence of these being used to meet individual young people's needs.

Staff support and encourage individual interests in healthy activities. Examples highlighted include gym, walking, swimming and cycling. The staff have established good links and relationships with community based activity providers. Therefore, young people's health needs are identified and services provided to meet the young people's needs and good health is promoted.

Staff are trained in medication matters to enable them to safely store, administer and record the medication that they are responsible for. Medication is securely stored. Very good policies and procedures around medication help to safeguard the welfare of young people. All staff have received training to enable them to provide first aid if necessary. Therefore, young people's health needs are well met, and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Details about young people's care is recorded and stored appropriately to maintain good levels of confidentiality. Young people have access to a private telephone which is free to use for reasonable periods. This ensures that young people's privacy is respected and the payment method is convenient. Staff demonstrate a very good understanding of facilitating privacy for the young people. This is done very sensitively and safely. Young people confirm this.

All staff have received training on complaints to ensure that they know what to do if there is a complaint about the service. Young people are supported in complaining if they are worried or unhappy. Young people confirm this. Staff have explained the procedure and there is also information in the young people's guide about how to complain. Details of external agencies and contact numbers are displayed clearly. The young people also have the support of an independent advocate service. The complaints records contain the required details. Therefore, complaints are well handled.

The manager has established strong links with the Local Safeguarding Children's Team. An information display in the resource room has details of local agencies that young people can access for advice and information. Staff use team meetings to ensure that everyone is up-to-date about how to promote and protect the young people's safety. Good written risk assessments support this. The provider has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The manager and staff have received child protection training. Staff demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect young people's safety. Therefore, the welfare of young people is well promoted, they are very well protected from abuse, bullying and unauthorised absence, and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. This is a notable area of strength.

Behaviour management plans are used. They contain good, individualised details for staff to follow when managing young people's behaviour. Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. They are reviewed regularly for effectiveness. Physical restraint is rarely used to manage behaviour. Staff are trained in the provider's policy and authorised techniques. Record keeping is good and there is evidence that it is monitored well.

All significant events at the home have been notified to the relevant authorities including Ofsted.

Good quality written risk assessments are recorded to enable staff to know what action to take to minimise the risk to each young person during their known and likely activities. These are reviewed regularly. The staff talk in a determined manner about their commitment to ensuring that the young people's welfare is safeguarded.

All staff working at the home have received up-to-date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. The fire safety check records are up-to-date and accurate. There is an up-to-date fire safety risk assessment. All staff and young people have been involved in regular fire safety drills. Therefore, young people's physical safety from fire in the home is well protected.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people. Staff confirm this.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The staff appreciate that the individual young people may have needs arising from diversity. Young people learn about difference through meetings, events and activities. All staff have received training around equality and diversity. The promotion of equality and diversity at the home is good. The records contain details of individual support services involved in the health, care, leisure opportunities and education of the young people. The home has very good links with a wide range of helping agencies, and the provider commissions services to fit the young people's needs. An information area in the resource room has details of local agencies that young people can access for advice and information. Therefore, the young people benefit greatly from receiving very good individualised support appropriate to their needs.

Staff are enterprising in their thoughts and efforts to support the young people's ambitions in education. It is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Some staff have gained

teaching assistant qualifications to support their efforts. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good attendance and young people are well prepared for the school day. There is space, resources and facilities at the home to enable the completion of home study or homework. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes. Staff and young people celebrate achievements regularly and certificates of personal effectiveness are proudly displayed. The young people are members of the local and town libraries. Therefore, the education of young people is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

The staff encourage and support a range of events that encourage participation, individual interests, and activities. Young people's involvement is supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. They are imaginative in their approach and they review the success of their efforts. Staffing levels are adapted to facilitate and support activities. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based activity providers. Examples of activities highlighted include gym, baking, disco and disc jockeying. There is also a good range of books, DVDs and electronic games available in the home for learning and entertainment. All young people are members of the local and town libraries. Therefore, young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people concerned, and take into account the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents. All admissions to the home are planned and the child or young person and their family where appropriate are involved in that planning. Young people visit the home before they are placed. Therefore young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

Care plans are recorded along the lines of the Every Child Matters desired outcomes for children. The plans are very comprehensively written. Focussed one to one work is regularly undertaken to enable young people to seek guidance, advice and support on any matter. The staff recordings are constructed to clearly reflect the outcome groups which makes analysis and monitoring easy. The daily records reflect the content of the care plan and the action taken by the staff to meet the identified needs of the young person.

There is a system for reviewing the placement plans of the children and young people at the home. This system includes participation in the statutory reviews, internal reviews of the placement plan and informal discussions with the child or young person in key worker sessions. Statutory case reviews have taken place within the required timescales to inform those working at the home and others of progress made by young people. This ensures that the young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home.

Key workers monitor the care plans and produce monthly progress reports for other professionals and parents. These help to provide consistency of care and promote young people's progress and achievements that may otherwise go unnoticed. The planning, recording and reviewing process is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Young people's contact is promoted and very well facilitated. Young people confirm that they can keep in touch with people that are important to them, and that they can have friends and family come to visit them.

Young people describe ways in which they are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and influence the way that the home is run. This includes daily one to one discussion, visits from the providers and young people's meetings. Aspects of routine such as coming in times have been questioned by the young people and they have successfully negotiated changes to it. Therefore, young people's views are genuinely sought and acted upon.

The young people have good relationships with the staff. They were observed enjoying friendly, respectful banter, as well as praise and encouragement from the staff. The manager makes every effort to achieve continuity of staffing so that young people's attachments are not overly disrupted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are taught day-to-day life skills according to their level of maturity and understanding. The young people learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, following budgets and doing simple do-it-yourself tasks. They are also given help and support with social skills, laundry, clothing care and cleaning. The young people's learning is evidenced using written and photographic records. Certificates of personal effectiveness are awarded by an external moderator. These are transferable credits which can be accumulated to gain an Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualification. Therefore, young people receive care now which helps to fully prepare them for adulthood.

All parts of the home are clean and maintained in a good state of decorative repair. The outside garden area is safe and well maintained. There is a good system and procedure to complete maintenance and repairs. Therefore, young people enjoy homely accommodation, that is decorated and maintained to a good standard.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A statement of purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a good children's guide to the statement which is appropriate to the age and understanding of the children accommodated. Children receive a copy of it before they come to live at the home so that they know what to expect if they choose to live there. The service should consider alternative

methods of communicating the children's guide.

There is a consistent staff team which has been added to recently to broaden the range of skills and experience among its members. New members of staff describe how they have received good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. Staff refer to written guidance and on call help frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. Management support and supervision are described as, 'good' by staff.

New members of staff receive very good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of regular refresher training is provided in a range of subjects to enhance the staff team's competency to meet the needs of the young people. All staff are registered on an appropriate National Vocational Qualification course and they are given good support to complete it. However, the target of 80% of staff having achieved NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People is not yet met. The young people are receiving care from competent staff that are experienced and appropriately trained to meet their needs.

The manager has a very effective system to monitor, report and evaluate the administration systems of the home, ensuring what staff record they record well. Robust quality assurance processes are regularly carried out by person's independent of the home, and any areas of weakness identified are promptly acted upon. These highly effective evaluations ensure the standards within the home, remain high. Therefore there is effective monitoring of the welfare of the young people in the home.

Young people's case file records and other written documentation is of a good standard. This facilitates good communication with other professionals as well as ensuring young people have a permanent and secure record of their history. Good cross referencing of all documentation enables the management team and staff to evaluate and monitor young people's progress. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff and yet accessible to young people. The young people know that they can have access to their records. The young people's individual case records reflect their development and progress.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Good approaches to promoting equality and diversity are detailed in all outcome areas. This is achieved through the good contribution the home makes to ensuring young peoples diverse needs are met. The policies and procedures, the statement of purpose and the children's guide makes clear the organisation's commitment to equality and diversity. Equality and diversity training has been completed by all staff. Young people actively contribute to written plans which set out a good individualised approach to care, health and safety. The staff understand and value people's differences and they encourage young people to do the same.

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 Children's 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):

- consider alternative methods of communicating the children's guide (NMS 5)

- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete an NVQ at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 29)