

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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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 and accommodation for up to three young persons of either gender aged eight up to the age of 17 years. The home is owned by a private childcare organisation.

The home is located in a quiet rural village. Accommodation is provided in well-appointed detached family house. This provides young people with individual bedrooms and ample communal space. The home's positioning on the outskirts of the a large town facilitates easy access to schools and a wide variety of recreational, social and sporting activities. There are three young people currently living at the home. All were present throughout this inspection and contributed to the findings in this report.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This inspection was an unannounced full key inspection. All outcome groups were assessed. Young people are receiving good quality care and support that fully meets their needs.

Two recommendations have been set as a result of this inspection. The medication administration record on one occasion did not contain the staff's signature. Staff are not following the home's policy which stipulates that where possible, two staff should sign to evidence that medication has been given safely. The physical intervention book does not consistently detail if any injuries are reported by the child following a restraint. However, the accomplished relationships between staff and young people continues to be a key strength of the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

No recommendations were made at the home's last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff provide healthy, nutritious meals that meet young people's daily dietary needs. Young people regularly contribute to the planning of meals, with mealtimes being social occasions that are seen as an important part of daily life. Young people also purchase their own food and cook for themselves in line with their independence

programme. Where assistance is needed, with regard to healthy choices or cooking skills, this is given by the staff. This ensures that the young people can make their own choices and know how to cook and prepare food for themselves.

The young people receive good support from staff and a very wide range of other appropriate professionals are available to them with regard to their health. There are robust processes for multi-agency working and sharing information within the staff team. This provides a very consistent approach ensuring that all aspects of health needs for individuals are met as far as possible. Young people's emotional well-being is also continually assessed and they are actively encouraged by staff to engage in the relevant support they need. Young people say 'staff do everything they can for us and go out of their way to support us'.

On one occasion a staff signature is missing from the medication administration chart. The home's policy stipulates that medication is to be signed for at the time of administration. This policy also stipulates that where possible two staff should sign to show that the medication has been given. However, there is only ever one signature and staff confirmed that this is the practice. Therefore the home is not following the company's policy or best practice. This does place young people at some degree of risk to misadministration. However, the risks have been significantly minimised because staff write in the daily log if medication has been accepted.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people clearly benefit from living in a home that has an excellent focus on safeguarding and protection matters. Young people are encouraged by staff to keep themselves and others safe. There are effective arrangements in place to ensure that staff are well informed about how to keep young people safe. Young people say 'I feel very safe living here and I can talk to any of the staff'. Young people are actively protected because staff recognise and understand their role in child protection.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected by all staff. Staff are sensitive and aware of the need to only disclose or share information that is needed to meet young people's needs. The home has good policies in respect of staff entering young people's bedrooms and for conducting searches of these rooms when it is necessary to do so.

The home manages complaints and concerns quickly and tries to resolve complaints in a manner young people both understand and can agree with. Records of complaints, both internal and external, identify clear outcomes. As a result, young people are able to raise concerns and issues. They state that they are 'confident the staff listen and act on what they have to say'.

The home follows the organisation's policy and procedures regarding young people who leave the home without permission; these practices comply with wider police protocol on absconding behaviour. Young people are actively discouraged from

having unauthorised absences and records demonstrate that procedures are being consistently followed. Staff focus on developing supportive and consistent relationships that encourage alternative and safer ways of behaving. Promoting young people's safety and protection is central to the operation of the home.

Young people are encouraged to behave well, to establish, achieve and maintain levels of behaviour that are socially acceptable and will sustain them in the wider community. The home's records detail consequences used for inappropriate behaviour and positive consequences and rewards for behaviour that deserves congratulation and praise. There have been several physical interventions needed since the last inspection. Although the information required by national minimum standards is being recorded on the incident sheets. The mandatory bound and numbered log is not on every occasion completed with the same rigour. If incident sheets go missing, this potentially impacts on assessing if any patterns or trends are occurring. This is because the Registered Manager would not have all of the necessary information at hand. Nevertheless, staff are successful at helping young people change their behaviour for the better. This is confirmed by the young people who say 'I love it here, they have done so much for me and this has helped me improve my behaviour massively'.

The home has an extensive range of operational policies and procedures that are used effectively to promote the safety and welfare of young people. The home has strong leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safety is acknowledged as important. Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards in the home. For example, risk assessments are completed in relation to fire and potential environmental hazards. All the fire systems are tested regularly and fire drills are undertaken in excess of statutory requirements. The home's manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment and vehicles are checked to ensure they are safe to use.

Staff recruitment procedures are thorough overall. No staff have been deployed into the home without first completing the required employment procedures; these procedures cover all the requirements of the relevant national minimum standards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are very effective systems in place to make sure that every young person receives the individual support they need. For example, thorough assessments, individual plans, key working and establishing links with other agencies.

Staff have access to a comprehensive range of information that identifies specific needs and support for each young person. A key worker system is in operation and a member of staff takes some responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of a young person's care and support. Records also take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity, such as identity, race, culture and religion. This individual key worker support is not promoted to the exclusion of other staff offering support.

It is clear that staff in the home work as a team and young people are able to approach all staff for help and support.

The home has a clear education policy which includes the active promotion of education through partnership working with other agencies and professionals. Staff are well informed about the progress young people are making because regular contact takes place between schools, colleges and the home. Young people are living in a home where they are motivated by a staff team that understands and values the importance of education. One young person commented that 'they have helped me get a college placement and are continuing to support me to achieve'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Detailed and holistic placement plans are developed by staff, with the full involvement of young people. Plans clearly identify outcomes and targets to be achieved. The implementation of care and support plans is the responsibility of individual key workers with contributions from the team as a whole. The care and progress of young people is monitored very regularly by staff and formally reviewed through the statutory reviewing process. This ensures that plans are kept up to date and relevant to the ongoing and changing needs of young people.

Young people's contact with family and significant others is encouraged and staff provide support to make sure that positive contact takes place. All arrangements for contact are discussed at an early stage of the placement and are detailed in placement plans. Any restrictions on contact are made clear and explained to the young person.

Admissions to the home are managed very carefully. The Registered Manager makes decisions about admissions based on detailed information presented to the home and with very close reference to the needs of the young people already living in the home. This ensures the welfare of young people and promotes the smooth running of the home.

Young people move on from the home in a planned way and are fully involved in the decisions that are taken about their next placement. This ensures that they feel their views are taken into consideration and excellent support is given to them during their move.

Consultation and communication with young people is an area of real strength in the home. As well as being consulted about their care plans, young people are regularly consulted about the daily life of the home, in house meetings and through informal discussion. Young people feel that they are fully involved in all the decisions that are made about their lives and can contribute their views to the running of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are learning both social and practical skills. This includes how to handle money and how to act in safe, healthy and hygienic ways. They are learning how to relate socially to others around them in order to cooperate with their peers and staff. This not only equips them with the skills needed to help them as an adult, but inspires them to respect and value their own needs and the differing needs of others.

Young people enjoy staying in an accessible and pleasant environment that is welcoming and safe. Resources and space are used effectively to maximise young people's independence and to provide them with a secure environment. The home is well-maintained with good quality décor and furnishings.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The effective management of the home significantly contributes to the care and support young people receive. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service that are consistent with the Statement of Purpose. Young people are well-informed about what the home provides through a young person-friendly guide.

Young people receive a high quality service from an experienced staff team who regularly receive good training, supervision and annual appraisal. Young people flourish as they are cared for by an exceptionally well-organised, committed management and staff group who are dedicated to providing care of the highest quality.

All staff receive a varied range of new and refresher training to ensure they are equipped with skills to support and meet the needs of young people in their care. One staff member stated that she 'feels well-supported' and another commented that 'I really enjoy working here as I feel valued'.

The home has clear deputising arrangements in the absence of the Registered Manager and there is a formal on-call system to ensure additional support is available from experienced staff if needed. The staff rota is planned in advance and ensures that there is an appropriate number of staff on duty to meet the needs of young people.

The provision of equality and diversity is outstanding. The home celebrates difference through valuing diversity and ensuring that there is equality of opportunity for all their young people. They successfully recognise that young people from different backgrounds bring understanding, fresh ideas and different perceptions.

Young people's care files are meticulously organised and include all of the information detailed in schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Young people and staff thoroughly enjoy the stability of an efficiently run home. Systems for monitoring the operation of the home are robust and help to develop practice.

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):

- ensure staff implement the home's medication policy and guidance in practice (NMS 13.10)
- ensure on every occasion that the bound and numbered record of restraint records if any injuries are reported by the child. (NMS 22.9)