

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 registration is for a small children's home providing accommodation for three young people aged from 10 up to the age of 18. There is a separate single bedded satellite home close by, both homes share a manager and draw from the same pool of staff.

The main home is inconspicuously located, three miles south of a large market town. The satellite home is on the outer edge of the same town. The accommodation in both settings is domestic in scale. The main house is in a compact but comfortable detached family house with a sizeable rear garden. The satellite home is a two bedded semi-detached property with a rear garden. Both homes afford individual bedrooms and have communal spaces downstairs. Each home has their own Statement of Purpose, but operate all of the policies and procedures of the main house. Both houses draw staff from an extended staff group based at the main house.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an interim unannounced inspection that concentrated on all key national minimum standards in the outcome area of staying safe. Some aspects of the outcome area for positive contribution were looked at. The inspection also looked at the home's responses to one recommendation made at the home's last key inspection, which took place on the 21 April 2010.

The inspection found that the home continues to provide a generally good standard of care, which supports and helps young people in their personal, social and emotional development. Staff relationships with young people are caring and supportive. Young people, as a result, benefit from living in a home that is consistently managed and organised to help them achieve good outcomes. The home's fire risk assessment is overdue for review and the recording of visitors to the home lacks consistency. Emergency admissions to the home have not always been reviewed as quickly as they should. Whilst contact arrangements are properly contained in young peoples care plans, they are not always implemented as smoothly as they should be. Staff training levels remain below the minimum level required by the national minimum standards (NMS). As a consequence five new recommendation have been raised.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home continues to strive to meet the requirement for 80% of all staff to hold an National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 or equivalent qualification in looking after children and young people. The home's failure to meet this target has been due to staff turn over rather than any lack of commitment to the appropriate training of staff.

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 clearly benefiting from a service that has a good focus on safeguarding. The home has good leadership that effectively promotes their safety and welfare, supported by a good range of operational policies and procedures. Staff receive ongoing training in child protection and behaviour management that helps underpin safe day-to-day practice.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is promoted by sound guidance and good staff practice. Staff ensure that they do not enter young people's rooms without knocking. Young people's care records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. Staff are aware of the young people's right to privacy and how this may be safely promoted.

Staff and young people know that unwanted behaviour of any kind is not tolerated and will be challenged. This makes this home a safe and comfortable place to live because expectations about behaviour and conduct are clearly communicated in a way that has a positive affect on young people. Young people are able to raise concerns and complaints with staff through a well-advertised complaints procedure.

Safeguarding is the paramount priority within the home; it influences everything that is undertaken within the home. Young people are provided with appropriate levels of staffing. A key success of the home is the way in which staff are able to engage with young people about matters that are significant to their safety and protection. Important areas are covered that are part of the home's approach to managing risks and raising young people's awareness.

Staff are aware of triggers, which may result in a young person absenting themselves from the home. Staff respond appropriately to instances of young people going absent without authority and work closely with other agencies to minimise any risk. Records of unauthorised absences are kept and monitored by the manager.

Staff are vigilant with regard to all relationships and take action if bullying is suspected. The home's records comprehensively evidence that staff engage with young people frequently about matters that relate to their behaviour and conduct. There is a positive approach taken by staff, they are clear about social and behavioural boundaries that are expected but equally they are clear about each young person's needs and how they learn about what is and is not acceptable. As a result, staff are patient and mindful of their responsibilities to educate and focus on acceptable and improving behaviours that can be rewarded and praised.

Issues of safety and welfare are generally given appropriate priority and young people live in a home which is both physically safe and secure. For example, risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis and staff within the home are all involved in these routines to ensure that health and safety is promoted by everyone. Portable appliance testing for electrical safety has been done on all equipment in the home and all safety equipment has been regularly serviced. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment and emergency lighting, and fire drills are regularly completed. The home's environmental fire risk, assessment should be reviewed annually, however, currently this is out of date and requires review. The Registered Manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment and vehicles are checked to ensure they are safe to use.

Young people's protection is also very well promoted through safe recruitment, selection and vetting practices for all new staff. The service has a clearly defined system in place that ensures all necessary checks have been completed and are acceptable prior to any new staff member starting work in the home. Visits to the home are appropriately vetted, prior to admission to the home, however, the records of when they leave and whether identity checks have been conducted are not always completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Whilst all young people currently resident had, as part of their care planning arrangements, details concerning the desired contact arrangements for them seeing their families or important individuals, it was unclear how staff communicated these details to ensure that they were effectively implemented. Practice observed demonstrated a lack of clear planning or preparation which impacted unnecessarily on the young person.

The home has good policies and procedures in respect of admitting young people into the home, this includes the provision for the home to admit young people in an

emergency. The home's procedures, in line with regulation, require impact risk assessments to be conducted prior to admission and in the case of emergency admission for there to be a review of the placement with 72 hours. Whilst the home's records contained good evidence of appropriate assessments of potential impact it was also clear that not every emergency admission to the home had been followed by a review within the required timescale.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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 that staff complete fully the record of visits to the home on each and every occasion (NMS 27.11)
- ensure that the premises fire risk assessment is reviewed annually (NMS. 26.1)
- ensure that a review is initiated as soon as possible, and never more than 72 hours later, after any emergency admission to the home (NMS 5.6)
- ensure that children are provided with practical support for constructive contact with parents, family and other significant people, and are encouraged to maintain contact (NMS 4.1)
- ensure as soon as possible that 80% of the staff deployed to the home have completed an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent qualification in childcare. (NMS 29.5).