

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 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 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

This was a full unannounced inspection that concentrated on all key National Minimum Standards (NMS). The inspection took place over two days. The home's deputy manager was available on the first day, the registered manager through-out the second day. Four young people were living in the home, three in the main house and one in the satellite unit. Due to education commitments none of the residents in the main house took an active part in the inspection, however, they did complete questionnaires. The young person in the single bedded home was present for part of the inspection and readily shared their views on living in the home.

This children's home is judged to be good, but has some outstanding features. The home provides a good standard of care and support that helps young people in their education, personal, social and emotional development. The home's manager provides strong and effective leadership which results in staff being clearly focused and guided in meeting the needs of young people. Staff relationships with young people are caring and very supportive. The strength of the home is the outstanding quality of the care planning arrangements for each young person and the degree that young people are encouraged and supported to achieve well and enjoy this success. Young people are benefiting from living in a home that is consistently managed and organised to achieve the best possible outcomes for those individuals accommodated.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Only one recommendation was raised on the last inspection, that every attempt be made to raise the level of staff qualifications in child care to enable the home to achieve, as soon as possible, the 80% required by the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). This recommendation has been repeated as the home still does not meet the 80% requirement for staff to hold a NVQ at Level 3 in childcare. This shortfall, however, is due more to changes in personnel rather than by any lack of commitment to, or provision of, adequate training.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are supported so that their health and well-being are actively promoted. Staff involve and engage with young people about a range of issues that enables them to be more aware about their own health.

Menu records confirm that young people are provided with a balanced menu that demonstrates a clear understanding of what constitutes a healthy nutritious diet. The menus produced show a good awareness of cultural and religious practices, ensuring that each young person receives a diet specific to their needs. The home encourages all young people to celebrate culturally significant festivals and to be tolerant and respectful of each young person's belief and cultural heritage.

Health issues that relate to ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith and belief are fully assessed in respect of each young person and are respected by the staff team. Young people at this home are receiving a good service that is clearly focused on their emotional well-being and health needs. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health-related issues which result in consistent improvements to health and fitness. Young people's good health and well-being is being successfully promoted because staff are knowledgeable and aware of each individual young person's needs.

Relevant information is obtained from a range of sources to ensure the home is fully informed about the health and emotional needs of young people. Young people are able to access appropriate services because the home is quick to respond to changing needs and circumstances. Young people's health needs are being well promoted because the home's records highlight the range of medical services that have been accessed. The home's manager acts as a strong advocate for the needs of young people in relation to accessing external advice and services.

Young people's health and safety is also promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following pharmacy instructions in relation to the health needs of individual young people. Staff are able to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because they have access to first aid boxes and have been trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is further promoted by managers who monitor all accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The welfare and safety of young people is promoted by the company policy and procedures and the home's established systems for keeping young people safe. The stability of the home, promoted by a considered admission practice and stable core staff team enhance the way in which young people can be protected. 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.

The young people living at this home are aware of the reason they are being looked after and how staff will promote their safety and protection within the home and in public places. Staff

are fully aware of the types of behaviour which young people may display and accordingly develop risk assessments that minimise the potential for young people to subject themselves or others to harm. Staff know how to respond to challenging behaviours and in circumstances where young people may abscond. Young people are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour after such incidents to learn how to help themselves to be safe and behave responsibly.

Young people are encouraged and supported by their carers to behave in ways that will help prepare them for returning home or eventual independence. Staff help young people identify and maintain safe behavioural boundaries that will help their reintegration and personal development. Young people confirm that staff help them address their problems and behaviour.

Staff take positive steps to keep young people and visitors safe from all environmental hazards including fire. 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 (PAT), for electrical safety has been done on all equipment in the home and all safety equipment has been serviced with approved regularity and is properly maintained. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment and emergency lighting, and fire drills are regularly completed. The Registered Manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment and vehicles are checked to ensure they are safe to use. Young people live in a home which provides physical safety and security. This home does take the safety and welfare of the residents seriously and young people live in a home which is both physically safe and secure.

The home has robust procedures in place for the monitoring of visitors to the home. The organisation that owns this home has a clearly defined recruitment process which protects young people by ensuring that all of the national minimum standards requirements are met, in all instances, prior to any staff member being deployed into the home. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection and is followed in respect of all staff currently employed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are receiving an excellent range of individual support and guidance that is consistent with their identified needs. Staff have a positive attitude towards education and take a keen and active interest in young people's development and learning. Young people are living in a home where they can consistently enjoy and achieve.

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 where 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. Whilst some individual support is delivered through key worker arrangements, this process 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.

Staff actively promote the social inclusion of young people in the home's daily routines and events. Young people are supported to access and attend various community-based activities and venues according to their own choices and preferences. Staff are keenly supporting young

people to develop their own interests and hobbies because significant attention is being paid to this area of personal development and growth. Young people are supported to access specialist external services to ensure all their identified needs are being met. The Registered Manager reviews and updates assessments so staff are informed about what they can do to reduce potential risks to young people.

Young people's care and support is also clearly focused on their overall plan of care, matching the placing authorities aims and objectives in relation to future plans and placements. The Registered Manager and staff have a strong focus on organising themselves around young people and their needs which supports improving outcomes for each individual.

The home has a clear education policy which includes the active promotion of education through partnership working with other agencies and professionals. The home has access to the company's own education facility, which is registered with Ofsted and all local authority educational services to ensure that educational placements meet each individual's needs. It is clear that young people are being well supported with their formal learning and development. Staff are comprehensively informed about the progress young people are making because regular contact takes place between schools and the home. As a result of this, young people's attendance at school is excellent and as a consequence, their academic achievements are significant. Young people are making a success of school because staff promote education in a way that is effective and relevant to them. Young people are living in a home where they are motivated by a staff team that understands and values the importance of education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The care received by each young person living at this home is particularly effective because each individual has a placement plan that identifies the purpose of the placement and how the placing authority's care plan for the young person will be progressed. Case files confirm that the young people's progress is reviewed within the statutory time periods. Staff attend regular in-house meetings to record and update each young person's general progress during the interim period. Monthly reports are completed by key workers and the home prepares chronological reports to keep placing authorities informed. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details.

Young people are appropriately supported to maintain contact with their families in line with arrangements detailed within their care plans. Young people are supported by staff wherever necessary during family visits. Placement plans and supportive case file records make explicit the authorised arrangements for contact between each young person, their family, friends and professional workers such as social workers.

The home's records confirm that young people are actively involved with the decision-making processes within the home. Regular informative dialogue between staff and young people takes place when considering any issues that affect the running of the home. Key work sessions consider issues related to young people such as confidentiality and how feedback from young people should be acted upon in a safe and meaningful manner. The interactions between staff and young people reveal that the home continues to provide a relaxed setting where the involvement of young people is used to positively shape the nature of the care provided.

Staff meeting minutes demonstrate that issues with young people are dealt with using a consistent, safety-conscious approach within clearly agreed parameters. The young people's meeting records, key worker sessions and the home's general records continue to support the view that staff are enabled to offer realistic boundaries, be consistent in practice and promote the welfare of each young person in a positive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing and are well informed about their entitlements because the home has good arrangements and systems in place to manage allowances, personal needs and pocket money. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that the young people maintain an appropriate stock of essential clothing. Once these are established and maintained, the young people are at liberty to save their money for special items of choice. Pocket money is clearly recorded and being paid to the young people on a weekly basis.

Young people living at this home are appropriately supported to prepare for leaving the home whether this is to return home, to alternative carers or to move into independent living. Young people, when appropriate, are provided with properly constituted pathway plans, agreed by the placing authorities which give focus to preparing young people to appropriately leave the home. Preparation for leaving care and acquiring the skills for successful semi-independent living are an integral part of the care packages currently being provided by the home.

Young people live in well-furnished properties with good domestic style facilities. The home and its satellite unit are located in an urban location on the edge of a large town, the home has good access to all local amenities.

The main house covered by this registration is a homely and comfortable care setting which is decorated and furnished to a good standard which creates a pleasant living environment. Whilst all of this accommodation is of a good standard, the upstairs areas, particularly the communal ones, the bathroom and landing area do not reflect the high decorative standard of the downstairs areas. The home provides the right environment to ensure the social and personal needs of each young person are being met.

A programme of maintenance and repair is ongoing, however, this does not impact on the care young people receive. There are good systems in place that recognise maintenance issues and those with health and safety implications are rectified as a priority with evidence that demonstrates the owners invest generously in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a good home that is very well managed. The quality of the home's management impacts directly on the quality of the care and support young people receive within the home. Good communication is a feature of the home, which enables each staff team to be well informed about daily events, routines and the progress of each young person. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service which is consistent with the home's Statement of Purpose.

The Registered Manager provides good day-to-day support to staff who's commitment to providing a consistent quality of service is a strength of the home. Young people enjoy being looked after by a consistent group of staff, who cover most absences themselves. When cover staff are deployed into the home every effort is made to ensure that these staff are already known to the young people. Residents are well informed about what the home does because staff take time to explain and describe the services offered and how they can be adapted to suit individual needs.

The home provides a good range of information about its stated aims and purpose. Young people are given a booklet in an appropriate format to help them learn about what the home provides. The number of staff on duty is always enough to meet the needs of young people which supports their welfare and protection. The owning organisation has an induction, core training programme and support system in place that helps to provide staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to support and care for young people.

There is good leadership and management support because the Registered Manager is qualified, skilled and experienced and provides strong and effective leadership to the staff team and young people. The Registered Manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. Staff receive regular one to one supervision from either the home's manager or one of the seniors, at the frequency required by the national minimum standards.

Young people are being looked after by a staff group that is relatively experienced, and enthusiastic but which currently does not meet the required level of qualifications in child care required by the national minimum standards. There is a good emphasis given to staff training and development which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs. The current shortfall in the home achieving the expected 80% of staff having completed their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 in childcare is due more to changes in personnel rather than by any lack of commitment to, or provision of, adequate training. The home's manager was able, however, to demonstrate that all staff currently deployed to the home, other than those currently undertaking their probationary employment are enrolled on suitable training courses.

Young people are provided with appropriate levels of supervision and support because staff manage their time effectively and are deployed in a way that meets their needs. The staff rotas are flexible to meet the changing needs and circumstances of young people. Good management systems are in place to share information between different shift teams. Young people are being nurtured and comprehensively supported because their needs are being met and risks are managed in a preventative way.

Good systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of young people currently living in the home. The organisation has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the home's Registered Manager. The organisation conducts monthly inspections to look at welfare issues within their homes. Findings are reported back to the company. Records seen demonstrate that the content of these reports reflect an accurate picture of life for young people resident here. These reports are available to staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All of the home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. The home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

The Registered Manager is actively monitoring and evaluating the practice standards of staff and the quality of services being provided. Managers take an active role in the evaluation of the service and the impact the home is having on the care of young people. The manager has access to feedback from placing authorities, parents and young people. Areas for improvement are quickly identified or anticipated and positive steps are agreed and implemented to overcome any difficulties and to carefully plan the development of the service.

Young people's care files are very well organised to include all of the information detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential or third party information is kept in a separate section of the care file to enable the home to respond, in a timely manner, to any request made by a young person to read their care file.

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):

- 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).