

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

The home is a two bedded children's home providing services for children in crisis between 10 and 18 years of age. The Statement of Purpose for the home indicates that it offers 'intensive and focused support' to children who may have been previously referred to secure accommodation. The home is rurally located on the outskirts of a small village. The home is in a remote location so staff transport is a key feature of how young people access community facilities and services.

Accommodation is provided in a large farmhouse-style home affording young people individual bedrooms and ample communal space. Education is provided on site by a tutor. Life and social skills development are encouraged and supported by care staff in the home.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full unannounced key inspection. Two young people are presently living in the home one of whom and a previous resident submitted written comments. Young people were present during the inspection and contributed to the process. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as good. Young people receive individualised care that adapts to their changing needs and effectively helps them to keep healthy and safe. The services provided by the home help young people continue their education, look for post-16 opportunities and gradually prepare for independence.

The home is decorated in a homely manner and well maintained providing a safe, well-appointed, rural environment in which young people are enabled to address their issues and develop their understanding.

The registered person provides good direction and leadership to an enthusiastic, well-trained staff team who provide a good quality of overall service because they understand each young person's care needs. Staff are clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to a high standard.

Only one recommendation is made by this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered provider was asked to 'record effectively how the home ensures that the young person has opportunity to talk with a person

independent of the home on return from an unauthorised absence'.

The registered manager has taken some positive steps to address this issue, however how this is evidenced, continues to fall short of the standard's requirement.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Mealtimes take account of the individual preferences of young people while emphasising healthy eating and the importance of a well-balanced diet. Staff provide young people with the opportunity to plan and prepare meals to develop their understanding and competence. Young people are introduced to self help skills as part of their daily routine. Menu planning is inclusive offering a diverse range of dishes including those from different cultures. Mealtimes are social occasions taken around the kitchen table. Staff demonstrate practical understanding and competence having received training in food hygiene and preparation.

The health needs of young people are assessed prior to and during their placement to ensure that they can be properly provided for. Comprehensive health plans and medical records indicate how relevant guidance, informed advice and practical support is provided, while taking into account each young person's age and level of understanding.

The emotional health of young people is promoted through access to external services and professionals to help them with any specific therapeutic, social or medical needs. General practitioner appointments are made when young people are unwell and more generally health is promoted through regular optical and dental checks. Young people are encouraged to keep fit by engaging in sporting activities, such as playing badminton or other sports, using local recreational facilities.

The health and welfare of young people is promoted by the registered provider's policies, procedures, guidance and staff training. Staff access training in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid. At the home all medication is securely stored in lockable cabinets and accurately recorded when dispensed following national guidance. Good arrangements are in place for the treatment and recording of any accidents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children's home places great importance on its duty for providing a safe, protective and homely environment for young people.

The right to privacy is practically addressed for young people by them being provided with their own bedrooms, bathing and toilet facilities. Staff ensure high levels of administrative confidentiality through the protection of personal information and careful communication with other professionals. Contact, where authorised, is

handled sensitively to ensure young people's personal safety is not compromised.

The well-being of young people is promoted by the registered provider's safeguarding policies and procedures. These comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection that include countering bullying, managing behaviour effectively and dealing with the impact of unauthorised absence. The home uses statutory reporting systems to notify relevant authorities about significant events such as unauthorised absences. The format for recording absences requires minor amendment to confirm that young people on return from an unauthorised absence have access to a person independent of the home.

Staff practice is further informed by guidance provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board which includes how to recognise signs of abuse. Ongoing staff training is provided to ensure that staff are knowledgeable and competent to look after young people. Young people report that staff 'talk to us about how to keep ourselves safe'.

Staff receive training and take seriously all concerns or complaints young people may have. The complaint policy and contacts for children's advocates are summarised in the young persons' guide produced by the home. The Registered Manager monitors the complaints record to make sure that young people's rights and entitlements are upheld and formally acknowledged.

Staff base their management of behaviour on the active encouragement of acceptable behaviour. The staffing level of the home is adequate to manage safely and meet the specific needs of young people. Staff make clear to young people what the behavioural expectations of the home are through involving them in their own care planning. Young people are treated with respect and encouraged to always take responsibility for their actions and behaviour.

Staff receive training in behaviour management that includes the safe and minimal application of physical restraint. Training is refreshed annually and all recorded incidents are reviewed by the home's manager to ensure that practice is both consistent and safe. The views and opinions of young people are sought following incidents to improve the effectiveness of intervention and importantly encourage young people to think about the consequences of their behaviour.

The home assesses potential dangers to the care of young people by developing and regularly reviewing a range of risk assessments that relate to safety in the home and wider community. These include the risk from fire and household hazards, from young people's behaviour and from participation in recreational outdoor activities. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly to take into account changes to routine, environment, patterns of behaviour and the home's staffing and occupancy levels.

The home has effective systems for monitoring all visitors. No stranger is allowed access with the resident young people and all visitors to the home are supervised by staff. There are clear company procedures for the safe recruitment of staff which are

supported by practices that are robust. As a result, young people's welfare is actively safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are being well cared for by staff that have an understanding and awareness of child development. The home presently looks after two young people of different age, gender and general demeanour. The home provides both with consistency of support through the use of explicit behavioural boundaries and positive adult nurturing within a safe, protected and caring environment. By providing this stability the home is also able to focus upon specific individual needs particular to each young person as a part of their placement plan.

Young people are enabled during their time in the home to develop their confidence and practical abilities, by being supported with a wide variety of in-house, community-based and company-wide activities that assist self-awareness, the development of identity and improved self-esteem. Newer admissions sometimes struggle with the home's routines but receive encouragement to accept the help being provided by staff.

Young people can access additional external services appropriate to their specific care needs, for example with offending behaviours or independence planning from differing professional sources or their placing authorities. These practically help them promote the achievement of their care plan.

The registered provider is able to provide young people with education using its own on-site registered education provision or through mainstream schooling. Young people are provided with a structured curriculum that engages their particular interests supported by the production of personal education plans. There is evidence of education achievement and artistic productivity adorning the home.

Young people aged 16-plus are being actively encouraged to access further education or to engage with employment opportunities to enhance their abilities, knowledge and life skills in preparation for their eventual independent living. Progression is included within developing Pathway Plans.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Effective care planning is evident through pre-admission assessments and information sharing between the placing authorities and the registered provider. These consider whether young people will benefit from admission to the home and what type of admission may not be appropriate because of risks to and from other residents.

All young people are provided with placement plans that describe how placing authority's care plans will be developed, monitored and delivered. Placement Plans include summarised every child matters outcomes and, where young people are being prepared for moving on, a plan that describes how this preparatory support will be provided. Individual case files confirm that young people's progress is independently reviewed within the statutory time-frame. This process helps to ensure that the desired outcomes are being addressed and that the placement continues to be in the young person's best interest. Young people are invited to actively contribute to their meetings in whatever way is most comfortable for them, for example by being present or submitting their comments in writing. This involvement is fully recorded. Key workers' reports are regularly shared with placing authorities confirming ongoing and active liaison between the children's home and placing authority.

Contact between young people and their families is fully facilitated where this legally permitted and in the young person's best interest. Placement plans and 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 day-to-day records confirm that young people actively influence the staff decision-making processes. Formal and informal discussion between staff and young people takes place when considering any issues that affect daily routines. In practice this is seen by young people having very different and separate routines most of the time and considerable one-to-one staff attention. In addition, more formal key work sessions focus upon specific care-related issues and how feedback from young people can be made safe and meaningful. The daily interaction between staff and young people is generally relaxed and in this way involvement is acknowledged and used to practically influence how care is provided. Feedback is also generated during recorded young people's meetings. One young person when commenting about being able to make their views known writes 'definitely, that is a strong point of the home.'

Staff meeting minutes confirm that a consistent, child-centred, safety-conscious approach within clear and confirmed parameters forms the basis for the home's practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Dependent upon age and ability young people are provided with practical help and advice when preparing for the transition towards independence. They are encouraged to develop their capacity to self-help and to improve practical social skills such as the importance of good hygiene, learning how to budget using personal allowances, how to shop and take care of their own belongings and clothes. As a matter of routine young people are expected to look after their bedrooms. The home has developed working relationships with the leaving care support services, both locally and from their placing authority. The home invites full engagement of all

responsible parties for the task of pathway planning.

Despite the age of the building and its rural location the children's home provides young people with a good quality living environment. Considerable effort has been made to make the house homely and to respond positively to the needs of young people, for example one young person is in the process of changing bedrooms reflecting her need for greater space and storage for belongings. Individual bedrooms are decorated to the taste of young people. Carers have tried to make the building feel as homely as is possible by the addition of soft furnishings and communal decoration.

The home has an ongoing programme of maintenance that provides a satisfactory level of service for keeping the fabric of the building presentable and constantly improving the condition of underused communal areas. A functional 'chill out' area now provides additional useful space for playing interactive fitness enhancing electronic games and as a showcase for art and school work. Plans are in place to fully refurbish the dated and tired main bathroom this year.

Because of its age and location the home is unsuitable for accommodating children or young people who may have difficulties with mobility.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose for the home includes all information required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations, including details of the deployed staffing complement. Young people receive useful details about the home from the young person's guide.

Young people are looked after by a competent well-motivated staff team who are well supported by the experienced and qualified Registered Manager. Considerable importance is placed on regular staff supervision and team meetings to promote quality and consistency of practice and enhance the day-to-day care being provided. Staff can develop and inform their practice by having easy access to the registered provider's policies, operating procedures and guidance. Staff receive regular personal development and training opportunities that ensures that they remain in date with all statutory training. The majority of staff have the required vocational qualification confirming their ability. All others are enrolled on and undertaking courses.

The home has well-established internal and independent quality monitoring systems that evaluate all aspects of the care being offered. These systems confirm that competent home management safeguards the welfare, interests and differing needs of the young people living in the home. A development plan confirms the registered person's commitment by outlining the home's future objectives and aspirations.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people benefit from living in a home where staff are committed to providing individualised care and support. Staff

promote social inclusion and challenge any form of discrimination. The promotion of positive images and aspects of other cultures is evident throughout the home. Staff have access to training about equality and diversity issues.

Young people's individual case files are stored and arranged in a manner that is readily accessible to staff while maintaining confidentiality. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and know that they can request access to them should they wish to.

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):

- record effectively that the young person has opportunity to talk with a person independent of the home on their return from an unauthorised absence. (NMS 19.4)