

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 children's home provides domestic accommodation for a maximum of three young women aged between 12 years and 17 years. The house is located on the site of a secure estate but this home is not a secure home and offers open accommodation. The home is independently staffed and equipped and has its own gardens.

Young women are mainly placed following a period in the secure home on site and placements are arranged on a short-term transitional basis. The purpose of the home is to provide a more focused opportunity, a stepping stone from a secure environment, for young women to prepare for their next placement, in an open setting. The use of this house can also allow additional opportunities for increased levels of semi-independent living within a domestic setting.

The area is well served with local shops and community resources. The local town centre is approximately one and a half miles away and easily accessed by public transport. The home also has access to a car which young people use regularly.

Two young people are currently living in the home, both young people contributed to this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is an unannounced key inspection to assess how well this home is meeting the key standards in all outcome areas. In addition the recommendation from the interim inspection is assessed and reported upon.

Overall this home provides good care during an often difficult transitional time for young people. Safeguarding practice is effective and procedures are initiated appropriately. Multi-agency working is strong and enables young people to access a variety of services. Individual plans and risk assessments are comprehensive and regularly reviewed. Monitoring is effective and ensures practice meets standards.

There is one action and four recommendations from this inspection. The action relates to notifying Ofsted, on every occasion, of any of the events listed in Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The recommendations relate to; encouraging more varied meals; recording names in the evacuation records; providing equality and diversity training for staff and making sure all areas and views contribute to a homely environment.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection identified one recommendation relating to ensuring individual risk assessments are effectively implemented and regularly reviewed. Individual risk assessments are robust, staff demonstrate a good understanding of the vulnerabilities of each young person. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Overall good practice and effective arrangements ensure young people's health needs are met. Thorough placement plans outline health assessments, health needs and guide staff on strategies. As a result young people are supported to achieve healthy outcomes. Good links with local health agencies ensures timely responses for both planned and unplanned appointments. As a result young people can access health professionals promptly. Young people can also access the on-site nurse who provides an important resource. This enables any potential health issues or support to be detected quickly and prompting access to further services. This includes preventative support offering guidance on sexual health and safe choices. Specialist support is available for young people, enabling them to access mental health services if needed. Contracts with health partners enables young people to benefit from individual therapy, such as music or art therapy. Staff co-ordinate and record health needs effectively.

Good policies guide staff on safely administering and recording medicines. Self-medicating contracts are effective in supporting young people to take responsibility for self-administering medicines, where appropriate. Safe storage keeps medicines secure from inappropriate use and suitably stringent arrangements ensure the practice for any controlled medicines is equally safe.

Young people are interested in food and routinely prepare snacks and meals. Staff plan meals with individual preferences fully in mind and routinely consult with young people about their choices. Food intake is monitored as part of young people's overall health and diligent records show each young person's diet. The majority of meals are nutritious, however, sometimes meals which include chips or pasta feature two or three times in the same week. Young people are sometimes reluctant to expand their tastes or keep within a sensible budget, staff try but despite their efforts some day-to-day menus do not include healthy options and variety.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are cared for by staff who are experienced in working with young people who place themselves at high levels of risk and may frequently abscond from placements. Staff are vigilant and fully aware of individual vulnerabilities. Effective policies and procedures specifically guide staff on safeguarding processes, which are

followed in practice, to promote young people's safety. Staff follow individual plans and risk assessments diligently and initiate formal procedures in line with plans and locally agreed multi-agency protocols. This includes initiating meetings about the risks of sexual exploitation. Staff maintain regular contact with young people during any absences to guide young people on their choices and encourage a prompt safe return. Accountable records demonstrate good practice and relevant parties are promptly notified, including Ofsted. However, although this has not impacted upon young people directly, on occasion, notifying Ofsted has been overlooked.

Young people report no concerns regarding bullying, physical interventions or sanctions. Due to the structure of individual care plans and strategies, there is not a need for frequent sanctions. There are differences in what young people wish to do and what is agreed by multi-agency professionals as safe behaviour. At times this affects young people's relationships and investment in this placement. This dynamic is fully recognised and forms part of individual plans and risk assessments to work with young people on making appropriate choices, recognising risks, building self-esteem and self-respect. The overall aim is for young people to exercise self-control. Where risks are not manageable, prompt meetings are held to review plans in the best interests of young people.

Young people are freely able to contact family and friends using mobile telephones with agreed weekly top-up credits. Any room searches are conducted for good reason and young people are informed and present where possible and appropriate. Young people have their own bedroom keys to maintain their bedrooms as private spaces, although young people resent some of the checks, particular at night time. Practice is in line with plans, risks and to promote welfare.

Good arrangements ensure a physically safe environment, weekly and monthly checks of equipment and fire systems take place. Monthly fire evacuations exceed the standard, however the names of those taking part are not recorded. Therefore, it is not clear if everyone knows the evacuation procedure.

Effective systems for managing visitors ensures all visitors are suitably vetted and have reason to visit. Prompt action is taken to challenge any visitors who visit the site without authorisation. Good records are kept of visitors for each young person. Although main recruitment files are kept at head office, suitable records are kept to evidence effective recruitment practice on site. Structured and effective recruitment practice promotes safety and ensures all agreed checks are in place before new staff work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good levels of individual support from staff members. Structured key work sessions offer frequent opportunities for young people to express their views. Staff use sessions to work on the assessed areas in plans such as absconding, putting self at risk and not using free time as agreed. Partnerships

with local agencies enable young people to access specialist areas of support such as health advice and therapy. An advocate frequently visits young people providing opportunity for young people to discuss issues independently of the home. The advocate liaises with staff, senior management and other agencies on behalf of young people. Young people's views are clearly detailed in plans and staff are aware of the challenges in fully engaging young people with the support on offer.

Young people are engaged in educational placements and working towards qualifications. The education team on site is able to respond flexibly to maintain education packages during the disruptions some young people may experience in education. Good links with external alternative providers ensures creative options can be accessed and young people's interests promoted, for example vocational courses such as hairdressing. Young people's individual education plans highlight the areas to support young people. Regular reviews keep arrangements on track and achievements are clearly noted. One young person said 'I am going to college in September' another young person is planning a vocational training route. Young people are fully informed on the arrangements to open a new education resource on site in March. This will expand the options available to young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Comprehensive placement plans effectively outline young people's needs. Young people contribute to their plans and reviews, as do parents where appropriate. Parents visiting for a meeting say 'it is all about trust' when describing moving their child's plan forward. Young people are clear on the aims of their plans, contact arrangements, timescales and why some of their wishes are not possible. Young people's progress is closely monitored to inform planning, decision making and managing any risks. Regular multi-agency meetings take place to update plans and ensure plans remain appropriate for young people's needs. In addition, regular management monitoring of events, plans and progress contributes to effective planning and accountable practice.

In the majority of cases young people move from the secure setting to this home. Planned transitions include visits, joining in with activities and staying overnight as realistic tasters before moving to this home. This careful and planned approach enables young people and all parties to consider if a move to the open home is right for each young person. Where any indicators during this transition necessitate a need for review, this promptly happens. This ensures planning and matching with current residents is as thorough as possible. Overall admissions and discharges are well managed in line with the short-term remit of the home.

This service seeks to engage with young people, parents and partners to improve. Young people's views are sought and recorded daily. Regular young people's forums and independent advocacy visits also inform the service. Senior managers meet with partners and agencies to review contracts and evaluate outcomes. Evaluations

following placements are routinely sent to local authorities to gather their views. Overall some good measures are in place to consult.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported to increase their independence skills, responsibilities and decision making in their day-to-day lives. A very good independence package is available to support structured work with young people. This covers every aspect of adult life in detail and enables young people to assess their own progress. Staff are aware of the importance of emotional development as part of increasing independence and seek to use daily conversations and key-work sessions to support young people. Financial incentives provide opportunities for young people to earn money each week for completing regular chores in the home. This increases skills and promotes regular routines which are required to maintain a house. Young people are supported towards returning to family, a longer-term or semi-independent placement. Young people are clear on their future plans and how they are working towards these.

The home is a detached property on a large site. Each young person has their own room and is able to personalise this to their tastes. In many respects young people quickly settle as they already know staff and are familiar with the home and location on the site. Overall the home is pleasant with homely touches, however, some cigarette ends are scattered around the front door and there is a discarded bed and burnt oil drum on view from the home's windows. The latter is explained as temporary and part of the current renovation of the site. It is agreed this is not homely and very prompt measures were taken to address these issues.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A detailed Statement of Purpose and children's guide is informative and outlines well the services on offer and the purpose of the home. Overall the home is operating in line with its statement. Three-monthly reviews ensure the statement remains fit for purpose and any changes are promptly updated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Individual plans and risk assessments are detailed and specific to each young person. Specialist support and tailored education packages further support young people. The home works with parents and takes into account family dynamics in planning. Links with external agencies and the advocacy service create opportunities for young people to voice their opinions and access community resources. Young people's views and wishes are routinely recorded. Intolerant and discriminatory behaviours are challenged. The positive and negatives of the local community form part of plans. Staff understand the conflicts for young people who are living away from their locality. Policies, procedures and recruitment are aligned to equality legislation. Although there are

many positive areas of practice, equality and diversity training is not specifically part of the training programme to further develop day-to-day practice.

Young people are cared for by an experienced and trained team. Staff gain experience of working in both the secure and non-secure homes, therefore often know all the young people during their stays. This arrangement particularly benefits those young people who stay in this home and ensures some consistency. Staff feel supported and positive in their work and remain enthusiastic about engaging young people who may be reluctant to consistently accept support. Staff meetings regularly discuss young people's needs and current issues. The staff structure has clear lines of responsibility, decision making and monitoring. Duty arrangements ensure out of hours support for emergencies. The majority of staff have achieved the recognised qualifications for caring for children or are completing the course. Training opportunities are promoted and regular refreshers of core training are routinely planned. One staff member says 'I cannot fault the training on offer'. Overall young people receive good care levels.

Daily, weekly and monthly monitoring takes place and this regular review of records and logs supports the on-going assessment of young people's needs. Independent monitoring visits are satisfactory and safe storage keeps files and records secure and promotes confidentiality.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
20	ensure, if any of the events listed in schedule 5 takes place, all persons listed in column 2 are notified. In particular this relates to notifying Ofsted. (Regulation 31 (1))	24/03/2011

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- encourage young people to eat a varied and nutritious diet (NMS 10.4)
- ensure children and staff know the evacuation procedures. In particular evidence the names of young people taking part in evacuations in records (NMS 26.7)
- ensure the home creates a pleasant domestic environment. In particular all areas

and views from the home contribute to a clean and homely environment (NMS 24.1)

- provide staff with training and development. In particular ensure staff receive training in equality and diversity. (NMS 31.1)