

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Elaine Clare
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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 children's home is a detached Edwardian house. It provides care and accommodation for up to six young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged from 10 to 17 years. The accommodation includes a lounge, dining room, kitchen and single bedrooms for the young people. The home is close to all amenities and has good access to public transport.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This unannounced inspection was the first visit to the home for the year April 2010 to March 2011 during which the key standards were inspected.

Overall, this setting provides a satisfactory home for young people. A new manager, registered earlier in the year, directs an experienced staff team that have been brought in from a number of homes to add to an existing team. However there have been several shortfalls found at this inspection and six actions and five recommendations have been raised. Of these actions two are repeated from the previous inspection with one of these carried forward from the April 2009 Inspection. This is concerning involving the young people in the placement plans, keeping them reviewed and updated and staff having knowledge of them.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in September 2009 two actions and two recommendations were made. One of these actions had been carried forward from the previous inspection in April 2009. Both actions and one recommendation have not been fully complied with and will be raised again. One of these is repeated for the third time.

The Registered Manager has put in place a self administration risk assessment for any young person requesting to self administer their medication. This assessment was seen. However, at the current time no young person was self administering so it was unable to be viewed as a working document.

Only marginal improvement has been made to ensure the placement plan is kept under review. There is limited evidence to show young people are participating in drawing up and reviewing their plans. This ongoing shortfall also hinders the home securing the views of young people and ensuring the plan sets out a clear assessment of needs. This action has been raised for a third time.

The action relating to the recording of the outcome of complaints investigations has

not occurred. This is raised as an action for the second time.

A recommendation was made at the last inspection to make sure that young people are given the opportunity to have their views recorded on any disciplinary measure used by staff. Also, encourage young people to sign their names against the log. This has not been implemented. This is raised for a second time.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people are provided with varied meals which the staff prepare. The weekly menu is displayed in word format and shows consideration for each young person's likes, dislikes and dietary needs. The food is well presented and meal times are well ordered, happy occasions enjoyed by the staff and young people. By encouraging some of the young people to help with meal preparation, the staff are promoting good food management. In general, the food is appropriately stored. Most of the staff are trained in food hygiene.

The staff promote good health by encouraging the young people to exercise and be involved in outside activities. A large garden and a variety of play equipment enables the staff and young people to enjoy time together outside. Health education is discussed at key worker sessions or with outside professionals for example the sexual health nurse. Individualised health plans detail each young person's health history as well as the care they require. Optical and dental appointments are arranged and the staff ensure the young people access health professionals when required. Illnesses, accidents and injuries are well monitored and recorded with the appropriate use of body maps. Any health intervention is included in the report to the young person's social worker. Medical consents from the local authority or parents are generally in place with one exception.

Medications and treatment are satisfactorily administered and the staff are better in their record keeping. Medication administration records are maintained. However, there is no time of date or administration printed on the sheet and staff have to remember to add it. There are three accounts when a young person has been given double the recommended dose of medication. This poses a serious risk to the young person's health. Some staff are trained in the administration of first aid and well-stocked first aid boxes are in the home and company vehicle.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The staff respect the young people's privacy and handle information about them with sensitivity. Comprehensive policies underpin practice to enable respect and dignity in care. The staff recognise the importance of providing privacy for the young people. Wherever possible, a mixed staff group is on duty enabling sensitivity to gender issues. Those young people who want, can use the home's cordless telephone to

make calls in a private area of the home. Others choose to have their own mobile phone.

The staff recognise that it is important for the young people to raise their concerns and ensure they are supported to do so. However, not all their concerns are taken seriously, investigated and acted upon. Of the four complaints that the home has received since the last inspection only one has been completed to a satisfactory outcome. This was an action at the last inspection and is repeated.

The staff are trained in child protection and know how to respond to safeguarding concerns. The manager has not attended training in child protection since October 2006. The local safeguarding procedures are readily available in the home for the staff to reference and the home's new procedure clearly directs staff to the appropriate local people to contact. Sound recruitment policies require that all staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure before employment.

The staff at the home promote that bullying is considered to be unacceptable. They are very alert as to what constitutes bullying and intervene promptly. However, good staffing levels enable the young people to be well supervised, whereby the risk of any intimidation is greatly reduced. In addition, careful planning of the groups when activities are arranged includes consideration for which young people are likely to bully as well as those who are vulnerable.

There is a high level of children going missing from the home. Since the last inspection in September 2009 there have been 73 episodes. These include more recently much younger children absconding with the older teenagers. This puts the younger children at a greater risk. Police have returned young people and other times young people have voluntarily returned.

Satisfactory strategies are adopted to manage the young people's behaviour and these are resulting in appropriate physical interventions. However, sanctions sometimes have little relevance and appear excessive. For example, a child caught smoking had to have a member of staff accompany them to the shop when spending his pocket money for a month. One young person commented on the sanctions as being 'unfair'. There is little opportunity for young people to comment on sanctions and physical interventions. Several sticky notes have been left in the bound books requesting that staff attain the young people's view but to date this has not been achieved.

Measures to manage behaviour are detailed in each young person's file. The staff guide the young people as to what is socially acceptable behaviour and discourage them when their behaviour is inappropriate. The result is that behaviour is generally managed and that the numbers of incidents are decreasing. Incident records are maintained and monitored as part of the home's quality assurance.

There are measures in place to maintain the safety and security of the young people. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and the organisation has the required public liability insurance. Some positive steps are taken to protect against the risk of

fire and other hazards. Staff organise regular fire drills; but there is no evidence to support that the night staff have been included in a drill within the last year. This presents the risk that all staff may not know how to care for the young people in the event of a fire.

Visitors are appropriately vetted and satisfactory recruitment processes are undertaken to protect the young people. Visitors and contractors are well monitored by being required to show evidence of identification, to sign the visitors' book and being supervised while on site. When staff are being recruited all the necessary information is received prior to employment and discussions with staff confirm that the required checks are made.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff provide very good individual support for the young people, through a key worker system. Professional services are accessed when needed and individual time provides the opportunity for each young person to express their personal concerns with any staff member. Group activities counter the risk of a young person becoming isolated. Observation of the young people confirms that they respond reasonably well to the care that they are given. The records to support the excellent one-to-one work being undertaken are variable. However, these sessions enable young people to make progress as well as help them achieve individual goals.

The staff support the young people in their education and learning. Resources are available around the home and each young person has an education plan for the school they attend. The setting liaises well with the schools to ensure there is a consistent approach for them. Education is valued; the staff make the necessary transport arrangements to enable the young people's attendance at school and each young person's teacher is invited to attend their looked after child review. There has been good transition plans for young people moving up into secondary school.

The staff organise many activities and leisure interests for the young people and there are lots of games and equipment for them to enjoy. Equally the staff recognise that the young people need to have time to relax and enjoy quieter pastimes, or to have time alone to pursue their individual interests. Staff are learning to consult with the young people as to what they would prefer to do. Group house meetings for the young people have proved beneficial and areas raised are put onto the following week's staff meeting agenda.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Individual care plans, risk assessments and health plans are developed for each young person. Of the three young people's files looked at, two had plans which from a previous placement, although one of these had been updated after two months

living at the home. No placement plan had been signed by the young people. A few staff had signed the plan as being read but the majority had not signed the document. On the second day of the inspection some placements plans had been signed. A comment from one young person said that they had never seen their placement plan until staff asked them to sign it the previous night. This lack of consultation with young people was raised at the last two inspections and resulted in an action each time. Daily records of events and progress are maintained and reports forwarded to each young person's placing social worker.

Reviews of care are held as required within the 'looked after children' framework. Some of the young people attend as appropriate and the staff are included whereby the young people's progress, likes and dislikes are contributed. Those teachers, family members and health professionals involved in young people's care are invited and all the required paperwork is held in the young person's file. This is available for young people to access with staff support.

The staff support the young people to maintain contact with their family within their placing authority's guidance. Each young person's contact arrangements are known and are agreed at their review. The home is welcoming for families when they visit and records of supervised contacts are maintained. Appropriate policies and procedures underpin the practices in place.

The admission process is mostly planned and structured; young people are only admitted quickly if it is within their best interests. Information about the home is available in suitable formats for the young people as well as their parents or carers. Each young person is encouraged to bring small favourite possessions with them. They are then well supported when they move into the setting, to enable them to express and cope with their feelings about moving. Similarly, the staff aim to ensure a young person is prepared for moving from the home although this could not be fully inspected for any of the current client group accommodated.

The staff sometimes seek the young people's wishes and involve them in daily choices within the home; but they are not consulted on sanctions or physical intervention. Key worker sessions as well as play provide opportunities to explore the young people's views. Social workers feel that communication is generally good and that they are involved in decisions about the care of the young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care that helps prepare them for and support them into adulthood. Independent living plans assess their skills and outline their needs. These are updated regularly and reflect the progress made. Weekly planners are compiled with the young people to enhance their life skills. Staff work to address practical and emotional issues involved in independent living. Both of the young people have developed skills, for example, budgeting and self care. Pathway plans are not in place and no meetings have taken place to plan the support young people will need

when they leave with the local authority.

The setting provides comfortable accommodation that is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. The house is a large detached property set within its own grounds and situated in a small village with shops and facilities easily reachable by car. Set back from the road, the drive at the front of the home provides sufficient space for several cars to park. A large enclosed area to the back of the home is well equipped with play equipment, providing safe recreational space for the young people. The exterior of the property is in a good state of structural and decorative repair. Internally two lounge areas provide space for relaxation and enables group or individual activities. A good sized dining area provides sufficient space for the staff and young people to eat together and the kitchen next to it is a useful workable space where the staff can prepare meals. Each young person's bedroom is appropriately personalised to suit them.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home's Statement of Purpose does not fulfil the requirements of regulations as it does not reflect: what the setting sets out to do for the young people; how they will be cared for; and what services they can expect. The Statement of Purpose states that the home is a medium to long term setting. Of the eight children admitted from January 2010 there remains only two. These young people were transferred from within the company in April 2010. Some placements have only been for a couple of weeks with one child staying only eleven days. With young people moving in and out of the home quite quickly, it is an unstable environment for young people to live in. The setting has also produced a useful young people's guide in written and symbol format.

The home is being managed by an experienced and suitably qualified manager who is supported by a new deputy manager and three team leaders. Recent staff transfers now enables sufficient staff on the rota to meet the home's Statement of Purpose. The shifts undertaken allow sufficient time for the completion of records as well as the handover of information. Staff undertake additional shifts to cover any shortfalls or agency workers are employed; there has been a higher usage of agency staff over recent months, but this is now reducing. More than the required 80% of staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification level 3 in the Caring of Children and Young People. Three staff have the National Vocational Qualification level 4. Timetabled supervision provides staff support and staff receive an annual appraisal.

Satisfactory quality assurance processes monitor the care of the young people and the home's performance against its Statement of Purpose. Although records viewed had been signed as seen by the manager, there is little evidence that areas of concern are being addressed. Visits to comply with Regulation 33 have been undertaken and a report produced. Copies of the monthly reports have been supplied to Ofsted but do not always highlight the issues raised within this report.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The ethos of the home is to recognise and support the different cultures, abilities, communication needs, language and faiths of any young person accommodated. A mixed staff team ensures that the individual personal, social, health and emotional needs of each young person are explored and care given to meet them.

Each young person has a file that is a permanent private and secure record of their history and progress. They can request to see it and to learn what is in it, with staff support.

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
13	make suitable arrangements to ensure that medication is administered as prescribed (Regulation 21.2)	31/10/2010
13	ensure that there is a written record of medical consent from the local authority or parent for each child accommodated (Regulation 21.1)	31/10/2010
16	ensure a written record is made of any complaint including any action taken in response and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24.5)	31/10/2010
2	ensure that there is an up-to-date placement plan for each young person accommodated at the home which is reviewed and takes into account of his views (Regulation 12)	31/10/2010
1	include in the Statement of Purpose the admission criteria and ensure that the home follows that criteria (Regulation 4)	31/10/2010
32	ensure the Regulation 33 and 34 inspections identify patterns or issues requiring action. And take action to improve the provision where necessary. (Regulation 34)	31/10/2010

Recommendations

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

- review, with the young people, the physical interventions; young people's views must be taken into account (NMS 22.14)
- make sure sanctions are not excessive and reasonably carried out. This should

include demonstrating their relevance to any given incident and that their effectiveness is clearly recorded (NMS 22.4)

- make sure young people are given the opportunity to have their views recorded on any disciplinary measure used by staff. Also, encourage them to sign their names against the log (NMS 22.14)
- ensure the Registered Manager attends a child protection training session (NMS 17)
- allow all staff including night care staff and part time staff to be involved in fire drills. (NMS 26)