

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	John Chivers
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	3 September 2009
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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

The home is registered to accommodate a maximum of four young people aged between 14 years and 18 years. The home is registered to accommodate boys only. The home is privately owned and is one of three children's homes owned by the service providers. The home provides a caring and supportive service to boys who have experienced abusive backgrounds and may display emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is a detached property situated in a rural location. However, several villages and a town centre are easily accessed by public transport.

Summary

The inspection was a full inspection and unannounced. All of the key national minimum standards in the sections being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were assessed at this inspection. There were no actions or recommendations from the last inspection and only one recommendation is made as a result of this inspection. The home is organised and managed to a high standard and affords an equally high standard of care and support to the resident young people, having full regard for equal opportunities and equality and diversity issues throughout its operation.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no areas scheduled for improvement as a result of the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have a well balanced and varied diet and special diets are catered for as appropriate. Young people learn about catering and plan their own menus, shop for provisions and prepare their own meals as part of their independence training programmes. Provisions are safely and correctly stored and the home engages the excellent practice of involving young people to undertake on line training in food hygiene. Staff are trained in food hygiene and the home meets the requirements of the local environmental health department.

The home has a high regard for health and medical matters concerning the young people and ensures such arrangements are reviewed and monitored on a regular basis. Young people are encouraged to live healthy life styles and they receive advice on various health and medical related topics via individual and group discussion with their key workers and during therapy sessions. Young people are registered with a local general practitioner and any visits to health and medical professionals are clearly recorded. Signed parental consent for medical and emergency treatment is held.

Medication is appropriately and safely stored and medication audits occur each week. Young people's medication administration records are clear and show no gaps in recording. Old or discarded medication is returned to the pharmacy for disposal and a record is kept. Staff are trained in first aid and medication administration. Young people said the home takes a positive interest in their health and well-being and encourages them to lead healthy and active lifestyles offering advice on a range of health related topics.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from the home's sound arrangements regarding privacy and confidentiality and are treated with dignity and respect at all times. Young people are confident staff keep information about them as confidential and afford them sufficient privacy regarding their daily lives.

The home allows young people and their parents unrestricted access to the appropriate procedures. Young people are aware of the home's complaints procedure, know how to make a complaint and are clear they have no complaints or concerns regarding the home or about the way staff treat them. Young people further said they are confident staff would take any complaint seriously and investigate it thoroughly. No complaints have been received since the last inspection. The home has a clear complaints procedure and a simplified version of the procedure appears in the young people's guide to the home.

The home has a comprehensive child protection procedure and has access to the county council multi agency safeguarding procedures. Young people benefit from the home's child protection and safeguarding arrangements, are appropriately supervised without this being intrusive and receive good advice and guidance regarding personal safety via individual and group discussions and therapy sessions. Staff are trained in child protection and any such issues are clearly recorded and appropriate notifications made, though there are currently no safeguarding issues in the home. Young people said they feel safe in the home and that staff have full regard for their protection and well-being and confirm staff reinforce this topic to them on a regular basis.

Young people interact well with each other and bullying is not a significant issue in the home. There are clear anti bullying procedures and young people said staff are quick to challenge and deal with such conduct when it occurs.

The home has a detailed policy and procedure regarding missing persons, though no unauthorised absences have occurred. The homely and cohesive atmosphere created and maintained helps young people feel accepted and benefit from the caring and supportive service they receive.

Young people's behaviour is very well managed with staff having excellent professional working relationships with young people. Staff interact and engage young people appropriately with good humour evident in their dealings with them. Young people respond well to staff instructions and requests and no significant issues in terms of behaviour management and control are evident. There is an incentive scheme which rewards positive behaviour. Sanctions are clearly recorded and the home's restraint book shows that no incidents of physical intervention or restraint have occurred. Staff are trained in behaviour management and young people said discipline in the home is fair and proportionate and they acknowledge their general behaviour has improved since being in residence and they learn how to come to terms with their previous unacceptable conduct. Young people's behaviour is closely monitored and any progress or issues are clearly recorded in their individual care plans. Each young person has a comprehensive behavioural risk assessment.

The home takes positive steps to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from the inherent risk of fire and other potential safety hazards. The home has a health and safety policy. There

is a detailed fire risk assessment and fire evacuation drills and fire alarm tests occur on a regular basis. The servicing of fire fighting equipment and emergency lighting also occurs on a regular basis. Staff are trained in fire awareness at induction and periodically thereafter. There are a wide range of generic risk assessments and utility safety test certificates are held. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the home and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

The home's recruitment arrangements help to ensure that only suitable staff are employed to look after the young people. The home has a staff recruitment policy and an equal opportunities policy. No new staff have been appointed since the last inspection, where the home's recruitment and vetting procedures have previously been evidenced as robust and sound, therefore staff recruitment files were not revisited on this occasion.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All young people are allocated key workers who provide young people with a high level of care and support. Key workers meet with young people on a weekly basis and prepare monthly reports and forward them to placing authorities keeping allocated social workers informed of progress or issues. The reports are comprehensive and well written covering a range of areas. In addition young people meet with the home's psycho-sexual therapist on a regular basis who also prepares detailed and informative reports. Young people are clear that their key workers and other staff afford them excellent support and openly praise and appreciate staff input in this area. In addition support is also available from a range of professionals as appropriate. Young people have detailed care plans which are closely monitored and reviewed and keep staff and young people abreast of progress.

All of the current young people attend the home's school which is a new purpose built unit situated a short distance from the home or attend local colleges. Staff encourage young people to complete homework and liaise with teaching staff on a regular basis. The home has access to a range of work experience placements and some young people are currently engaged in work experience on local farms. Young people said they value such experience and acknowledge it helps them to adapt to the discipline of work and will prepare them for life in adulthood. School reports and education related correspondence is held on young people's individual files and whilst the head of education confirms each young person has a personal education plan held on file at the school, copies of these had not as yet been forwarded to the home. Nevertheless this does not impair the care staff's awareness and knowledge of young people's educational needs and progress due to the sound liaison and information exchange between the two professions.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from having clear care plans which cover a wide range of areas. Key workers prepare the care plans and monitor and review these on a regular basis. In addition there are comprehensive individual risk assessments which also cover a wide range of potential risks. Young people said they are aware of their care plans and risk assessments and are in agreement with them, being consulted on the plans and assessments regularly.

Statutory reviews are held within the prescribed timescales and internal reviews are held as appropriate. Key workers write up the appropriate sections of the review notes and attend the reviews along with individual young people who make a verbal and written contribution if they choose to do so. Any contact young people have with their parents and significant others is clearly recorded.

The home has a clear and detailed admissions criteria and procedure. Admissions are carefully planned and the home only accepts older young people from its sister homes which are located nearby. This ensures that staff have substantial knowledge of the young people referred and are already acquainted with them. Nevertheless introductory visits occur prior to permanent admission. Young people are well prepared to leave the home and follow local authority pathway plans. The plans used are comprehensive and cover a wide of areas which introduce young people to independence. Work experience is also an important feature of the home's 'moving on' arrangements. Young people said they enjoy the challenge of work experience and value what they learn.

There is a high level of consultation via a range of forums which include one-to-one discussions with key workers and other staff and young people's house meetings. Young people confirm their views and opinions are sought by staff regarding aspects of their daily lives and this allows them to consider and make decisions consistent with their age, level of development and agreed risk assessments. Young people also confirm that staff take notice of their views, opinions and choices.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent preparation to leave care or a move to more independent accommodation. There are comprehensive pathway plans in place which have been described in the previous section of this report. These sound arrangements are reinforced by the home's commitment to finding work experience placements for young people of which they value and enjoy.

Young people are well presented in age and fashion appropriate clothes. Young people receive pocket money on a sliding scale according to age. In addition young people can receive an incentive payment for positive behaviour. There is a clothing and toiletries allowance. Clear records of monetary transactions are kept by the home.

Young people live in accommodation which is of a very high standard in terms of decoration, furnishing and character. Communal areas are homely and very comfortable and provide good space for the young people. They are tastefully decorated and furnished with quality items, fixtures and fittings. Young people's bedrooms are of an equally high standard and are personalised to varying degrees by their occupants. The kitchen is of domestic size and well equipped. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a high standard and afford good privacy.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding with the home having full regard for young people's differences, providing a service that is managed to a high standard affording an equally high standard of care and support to the young people.

The home has a detailed and informative Statement of Purpose and young people's guide which is reviewed annually and is available to young people, parents and significant others such as social workers. The statement and guide give an accurate description of the facilities and service provided.

The home's staff duty roster is available and gives a clear account of staff on duty and duty times worked. The staff team is led by a strong and established management team and staff have sufficient skills, experience and competence to meet the needs of the young people and enable the home to achieve its aims and objectives. Staff receive regular formal supervision and are appraised annually. All staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and receive further training in a range of relevant areas. Staff are aware and knowledgeable regarding the home's policies and procedures and are supportive of the home's management and ethos. Young people clearly benefit from the home's management and staffing arrangements and openly praise staff input into their holistic care. There is excellent communication between staff with handovers being held daily and staff team meetings held each week. Staff have full regard for equality and diversity issues and are clear that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service.

Young people's individual case files are organised and maintained to a high standard with information easy to access and in date order. The home has a development plan for 2009/10 which lists areas for action and completion. There are sound internal quality assurance mechanisms where the manager monitors and signs appropriate records on a monthly basis and Regulation 33, monthly visits are undertaken by the home's owners. The visits ensure all required areas are monitored and copies of reports are held at the home and also forwarded to Ofsted on a monthly basis. Evaluation forms are also received from parents and social workers commenting on the standard of the service provided and expressing their satisfaction with the home's arrangements. The home has a current insurance liability certificate.

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 that copies of young people's personal education plans are held in their individual files. (NMS 14.2)