

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Michael Williams
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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 is one of two run by a limited company. It is a traditional detached cottage located on a rural hillside in an area of woodland. It provides care and accommodation for a maximum of four boys with emotional or behavioural difficulties. At the time of this inspection, three boys were accommodated, aged 14, 17 and 18 years old. The latter two young people had been in placement together a long time.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection of all the key national minimum standards (NMS) for children's homes. Its key findings are that out of the six outcome areas inspected, five are good and one is outstanding. Therefore the overall judgement is good.

Outstanding features are the support given to individual young people and the active promotion of their education. Some of the good features are: the home's promotion of young people's health; their focus on safeguarding young people, including reducing the number of times young people go missing from the home; their management of young people's behaviour, and support of their constructive contact with their family and friends; their individual consultation with young people, and their preparation of young people for leaving care; the adequacy of their staffing, and their promotion of equality and diversity.

These findings concur with comments made by one young person and an external professional who has worked closely with staff and young people at the home. The latter said that the service does the following well: 'Communication with the young people, support, liaison with outside agencies, respecting children and young people, promoting independence, continual improvement.' They also said: 'Throughout my contact with the home I have found them to be open and supportive. I consider them to be outcome focused with robust practices that promote wellbeing and independence.'

To secure future improvement, action is required in relation to the home's Statement of Purpose and the person managing the home. A recommendation should be taken account of regarding impact risk assessments on new admissions to the home.

The above external professional said that 'Communication between staff' is where they think the service could improve.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection was an interim one in March 2010. To secure future improvement, it required the home to keep legible, accurate and full information in their written records of their use of restraint and sanctions. This inspection found that the home has taken this action, which is reported under staying safe.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Overall, young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. The older boys at the home are encouraged to plan, shop for and prepare their own meals. So the home's daily menus, which are monitored each month by the home's acting manager, include young people catering for themselves.

Young people's good health is promoted as their health needs are well identified and appropriate action is taken to meet them. Young people's health needs and health promotion is addressed in their individual placement plans and regularly reviewed. The home was not yet able to fully address the issue of smoking with one young person, until they and an external professional working with them had addressed even more priority health and social issues.

Young people's health needs are also promoted by staff following the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines. Prescribed and non-prescribed medication is securely stored in the home and regularly audited. A record of all medication administered is kept by the home and in the relevant young person's case records.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and their information is confidentially handled. Each young person has their own bedroom and their case records are securely stored and handled.

Young people know how to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the home. Since the last inspection the home has not received any complaints. One young person was being assisted by their advocate to put their views forward.

An appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. All staff at the home are up to date with Local Safeguarding Children Board training. Care needs, including safeguarding and promoting welfare, are included in each young person's individual placement plan. One young person's placing authority had a child

protection plan that the home was following and contributing to.

Young people are protected from bullying. The acting manager commented that this is even more so now that a young person, who they suspected of applying pressure to a new admission, had moved on. At their last review, it was reported that the newly admitted young person 'is enjoying [the home] and getting on okay with the other young people who are there.'

Young people who are absent from the home without authority are protected in line with the home's written policy and procedure. At the time of this inspection, the home's work with one young person had successfully reduced their absence from the home from a high level to nil. Each such absence is recorded as required in the young person's case file.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. The home has fully complied with the behaviour management action previously required: written records of their use of restraint and sanctions are now legible, accurate and include all the information required. Restraint has only been used once, and sanctions have not been used excessively, since the previous inspection. In every case, their use has been reasonable. The home was using an individualised reward system with one young person to promote their positive behaviour, and following a behaviour support plan for them devised by the company's clinical service.

Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards. The service employs a fire consultancy, who carried out an annual check at the home during this inspection. The home's acting manager has focussed on the older boys at the home increasingly taking controlled risks as part of promoting their independence. For example, they have been supported to use transport independently.

Young people are safeguarded by the company's careful selection and vetting of all staff working with them in the home. Since the previous inspection, the company has recruited a manager to take over from the current acting manager at the home, and to cover the continued absence of the Registered Manager of the home. The company have applied for a new enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check on this manager, and were letting them shadow the current acting manager at the home using their existing CRB checks. This is in line with Ofsted's position on the CRB checks process.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent individualised support to meet their particular needs. They receive this from staff in the home, especially their key workers, and from

external professionals, such as psychologists and youth offending officers, who work closely with staff and young people at the home.

The home promotes and supports young people's educational attainment. During this inspection, one young person received a distinction from the college they had been attending from the home. The home has been working with another young person, their placing authority and school professionals, to secure and maintain appropriate educational provision for them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people at the home are appropriately placed there. They have their needs comprehensively assessed, written placement plans outline how their needs will be met, and these plans are effectively implemented in practice.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. Young people's statutory reviews take place at the required frequency, and the home ensure that young people participate as fully as possible in their review process, either by supporting their attendance or by securing their views.

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families and friends. Young people's contact arrangements with family, friends and significant others are included in their placement plans, followed by the home and regularly reviewed. The home supports young people's family and friends contact both at the home and in their home areas.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. The two older boys at the home were soon going to be leaving for planned moves to semi-independent living. The younger boy had been admitted to the home in an emergency. Although the home had considered the likely impact of their admission, both on them and the existing group of residents, this had not been recorded in writing and included in their case records. A recommendation is therefore made regarding this.

Young people's opinions, and those of their families or others significant to them, are sought over key decisions which are likely to affect their daily life and their future. As the young people at the home do not naturally form a group, the home's acting manager has developed the key worker role to focus on individual consultation with young people. Staff also consult young people when preparing for their placement and review meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps to prepare them for and support them into adulthood. This was the case with the two older boys at the home, who were preparing to move on to semi-independent placements. One of them commented that the home had done 'a lot' to prepare them for independence. The home has developed young people's preparation for leaving care by encouraging them to be more independent through increased risk taking.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation, decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard, and providing adequate facilities for their use. Inside and out, the home is well maintained by the company's maintenance and grounds personnel. The home is kept clean by staff, including the weekly use of a domestic.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A clear Statement of Purpose outlining how the home operates is available for parents and others needing this information. This was last updated in July 2009. It therefore does not include changes following the planned absence of the Registered Manager of the home, who was also the responsible individual for the company. An action is therefore reported regarding this.

Young people receive the care and services they need from staff who have relevant qualifications and competencies. Staff are sufficient in numbers and experience, and they are well trained. All staff in substantive posts have achieved the relevant National Vocational Qualification at level 3. The current training document for staff at the home shows that their training in key areas is predominantly up to date, so they can continue to meet young people's needs in key areas.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Under the heading equality and diversity, in their self-assessment for this inspection, the acting manager wrote: 'Whilst attempting to maintain a sense of fairness and equity we strive to promote the individuality of each young person and recognise that they each have individual and diverse needs that deserve individually tailored responses.' This was evident during the inspection. An external professional commented: 'In my experience they [the young people at the home] are listened to and treated with respect.'

The care of young people in the home is monitored and continually improved in the light of information about how it is operating. The acting manager monitors each of the matters they are required to every month and reports on them. This internal monitoring is supported by regular provider monitoring visits and reports. Together this monitoring helps to continually improve the provision for young people.

Young people enjoy the stability of an efficiently run home. The Registered Manager of the home notified Ofsted that an acting manager would be in day-to-day charge of the home until the end of their planned absence in September 2010. Different levels of staff spoke very highly about the acting manager's work. However, at the time of this inspection they were approaching the end of their contract, and another acting manager was being introduced to the home. An action is reported regarding this, as Ofsted need to be given written notice of this change, and whether or not the Registered Manager is now going to cease managing the home.

Young people's needs, development and progress are comprehensively recorded to reflect their individuality. This has been aided by the acting manager changing the weekly reports that key workers used to write on young people into monthly summaries focussing on key areas.

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
1	ensure that the home's Statement of Purpose is revised where required (Regulation 5)	29/10/2010
34	ensure that Ofsted is given notice in writing of the change of person managing the home, and whether the Registered Manager is going to cease managing the home. (Regulation 38)	15/10/2010

Recommendations

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

- take into account and record the likely effects of a new admission, both on them and the existing group of residents, in decisions on admission to the home. (NMS 5)