

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	30 December 2009
Inspector	Anne Bannister
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	22 July 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

This is one of a number of residential homes, which are owned and managed by the County Council. It is a purpose-built children's home situated within a housing estate on the outskirts of a small town. The home is within easy reach of all local amenities and there is a regular bus service to the town centre. The home accommodates up to six young people of either gender, whose ages range from 12 years old up to 17 years old. Each young person has an individual bedroom. The home works cooperatively with other agencies in order to meet the specific needs of the young people being looked after. The main aim of the home is to enable young people to return to foster placements or family, or to live independently in the community, in accordance with their agreed care plan.

Summary

This was an unannounced, interim inspection. As this was an interim inspection, it did not assess all of the key national minimum standards. However, the inspection did assess how well the Registered Manager and staff protect and promote the safety of the young people in their care. There had been a significant breach in the children's home regulations 2001 as the home had failed to notify Ofsted of a safeguarding referral. The Registered Manager explained to the inspector that she understood she had also been instructed to act as the investigating officer. The local authority have since clarified that the social worker, in conjunction with the LADO, had undertaken the investigation. However, there was clearly confusion on the expectations placed on the Registered Manager.

Although many of the outcomes for young people are judged as good, the significant deficits in safeguarding practice result in an overall judgement of inadequate being made.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There are no actions or recommendations to be followed up from the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Overall, the arrangements to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of young people are judged as inadequate, despite many outcomes for young people being assessed as good. This overall judgement is given because the home is found to have failed to notify Ofsted of an incident resulting in a safeguarding referral. An instruction to make the notification to Ofsted was issued during the course of the inspection.

The Registered Manager understood that she had been asked to investigate this allegation against a staff member. The local authority subsequently made it clear that she had been asked to provide a later overview of events. In addition there are deficits in the manner in which staff are recording the effectiveness of sanctions.

During the course of the inspection documentation and discussions with staff indicated that an allegation had been made following an incident. This had not been notified to Ofsted despite discussions having been held with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) and the responsible individual. The Registered Manager understood she had been appointed as the investigating officer and relayed this information to the inspector. She had been instructed to interview all staff, young people and the police officers who were involved in the incident. The local authority corrected this impression, however, there was clearly confusion about the task the Registered Manager had been asked to undertake.

The failure to notify Ofsted of the allegation is a breach of the children's home regulations 2001. The manner in which the home tracks referrals made does not provide a chronology from start to finish of the investigation. The record therefore, does not indicate whether there are any outstanding issues for the Registered Manager to address following the closure of an investigation.

The home operates an appropriate complaints procedure and ensures that the young people are given relevant information on the various ways to raise issues which they are not happy about. Records maintained ensure that young people's views on the outcome of an investigation are clearly documented. Young people spoken to are aware of the various ways they can choose to raise issues which they are unhappy about.

All physical interventions and sanctions that have been imposed in response to unacceptable behaviours are recorded and are monitored by the Registered Manager to identify trends in behaviours. All staff are trained in behaviour management techniques and are skilled at diverting the young people's negative behaviours into a more positive activity. The Registered Manager overviews the effectiveness of all sanctions given to young people to ensure that challenging behaviours are being appropriately responded to. However, not all staff are recording their assessment of the effectiveness of the sanction given in the sanction log.

Bullying has been an issue in the home. When it occurs strategies are put in place by the staff team to address the behaviour. Young people indicate that staff respond quickly and effectively when issues arise. Such incidents are documented and carefully monitored by the staff team. Young people spoken to indicate that staff are clear that bullying in any form is not tolerated and that they do take actions to address and protect young people in the home who experience bullying.

Since the previous inspection there have been a number of incidents where a young person has been absent without authority. Such incidents are appropriately recorded, risk assessments reviewed and actions put in place to try to ensure that the young people do not continue to place themselves at risk. The staff team have enlisted the support of the community police officers to assist them in working with young people to keep them safe in the community.

Evidence and observation show that the staff team have a responsible attitude towards health and safety matters. The home has risk assessments in place for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds. There are also risk assessments relating to young people's behaviours and planned activities they undertake. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure young people's continued safety. Visitors are welcomed into the home once they have satisfied staff of their identity and the purpose of their visit, and have signed the visitors book.

There is thorough selection and vetting of all staff working at the home prior to employment that meets the requirements of standard 27 of the children's home national minimum standards. All required pre-employment checks are carried out and staff recruitment records are well maintained. These actions show the home takes suitable measures to ensure staff employed are suitable to be working with young people. There have been no new staff appointments since the previous inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
20	notify without delay all the relevant persons or agencies of the matters set out in Schedule 5 relating to allegations made against staff members and police involvement with the home. (Regulation 30)	1 February 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the log of safeguarding referrals gives a chronology from start to finish of the investigation. This should include comment, before concluding safeguarding records, as to whether there are any outstanding issues for the Registered Manager to address following the closure of an investigation. (NMS 26)