

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Dennis Bradley
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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 located in a village and provides accommodation for up to three young people aged 12 to 17 years old who are preparing for independent living. The ground floor has a lounge with satellite television, a dining room and computer with internet access, a laundry, office and staff sleep-in facilities, and a kitchen. The garden has an area for people to sit. The young people and another member of staff sleep upstairs.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this full unannounced inspection all the key national minimum standards were inspected. The inspection also looked at the progress the service has made with the requirement and recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to the home's records, policies and staff supervision. The three young people currently living at the home were present during the inspection.

There was evidence of positive relationships between the staff and young people who use the service. There are good arrangements for protecting and promoting the health of the young people. The home provides a safe setting for the young people although staff sometimes do not keep appropriate records of when young people are absent without consent. Staff are good at consulting the young people and involving them in decisions about their stay at the home. The home supports the education and achievement of the young people. There are good opportunities for staff to take part in relevant training.

Staffing levels provide good opportunities for staff to carry out one-to-one work with the young people to help meet their assessed needs. The individual needs of young people are recognised but their placement plans do not clearly identify what these needs are or what staff should do to address them. Staff are good at supporting young people who are preparing to leave care. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected. There are good arrangements in place for the internal monitoring of the care and welfare of the young people and for consulting parents and relevant professionals.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection one requirement and eight recommendations were made. These related to the home's child protection policy; records of sanctions and unauthorised absences; staff supervision and young people's placement plans. Action has been taken to address the requirement and most of the recommendations and

this should help make sure young people's welfare is promoted and that staff receive appropriate supervision. However, young people's placement plans still do not always clearly identify young people's needs and the expectations of staff in meeting these needs. These recommendations are repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people benefit from being cared for by staff who actively promotes their health and well-being. They also have good access to sources of advice and support on health and personal care issues. Staff are good at monitoring the health of the young people and they take appropriate action where necessary. Staff have a good understanding of a range of health care needs. Some have also received more specialised training to enable them to provide appropriate support and advice to young people.

Staff encourage the young people to eat healthy meals and give them appropriate choices regarding the food they eat. They are aware of the different dietary preferences and needs of the young people. One young person said, 'staff always try to encourage us to eat vegetables with our meals' and another said 'they help me choose the right types of food.' Young people can help with food shopping and the planning and preparing meals. Staff also provide appropriate support and guidance to young people who are responsible for preparing their own meals.

There are good arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication. These help protect their health and meet their health care needs. All but one of the staff have had training in safety with medicines and the Registered Manager has arranged further training for later this month. There is always a member of staff on duty trained in first aid in case a young person has an accident.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff make sure that young people's privacy is promoted. The young people all have their own bedrooms to which they have appropriate access. One young person's bedroom has an en-suite shower and toilet. Doors to the bathrooms and toilets have appropriate locks. Staff ensure information about young people is handled confidentially and stored securely.

There are clear procedures for managing complaints and ensuring young people are listened to. Staff make sure the young people are aware of who they can go to if they have any complaints. Staff take the views and concerns of young people seriously and complaints are addressed promptly and appropriately. A young person said they could talk to any of the staff if they have any worries or are unhappy about something.

The home has clear procedures for safeguarding young people from abuse and there are suitable arrangements for making sure that staff receive child protection training. This helps staff protect young people from abuse and ensures they respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Young people confirmed that staff help them to learn about how to keep safe. One young person said, 'I get advice from staff' and they 'give me a mobile phone when I go out so I can ring them.'

The home recently achieved anti-bullying accreditation and young people benefit from being looked after by a team of staff who are good at creating an atmosphere where bullying is known to be unacceptable. The home has a clear anti-bullying policy and suitable risk assessments are in place. Staff try to help the young people to develop an understanding and tolerance of each others diverse needs. Young people said they have not been bullied by other young people at the home or seen any others being bullied.

Staff take appropriate action when young people go missing or are absent from the home without permission. There are suitable policies and procedures to help make sure this happens. However, staff sometimes do not keep an appropriate record of these incidents and the action taken.

Staff are good at encouraging and supporting the young people to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. All of the staff have had training in positive behaviour management and most have had training that focuses on how to repair any harmful consequences of unacceptable behaviour, rather than on blame and punishment. Records demonstrate that when there have been incidents where staff have used physical restraint this has been reasonable and appropriate. When staff use sanctions these are relevant and reasonable. Staff are also good at making sure they respond positively to acceptable behaviour. Young people said that the rules of the home are fair although one felt they should get more pocket money.

There are good systems in place to keep the young people and adults safe from the risk of fire and other potential hazards. For example, there are good arrangements for carrying out regular checks of equipment such as fire alarms and staff carry out a range of risk assessments, including individual assessments for each young person. These help identify what can be done to reduce or avoid risks where practicable and appropriate.

The council takes appropriate action to help make sure the home only employs suitable people. It carries out a range of checks on new staff before they start working at the home. This includes a Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check. There are good arrangements for monitoring and managing visitors to the home. These help ensure they do not have inappropriate access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff make sure that young people have individual care plans and risk assessments and that they receive individual support when they need it. This includes providing appropriate advice and guidance. Staff keep appropriate records of one-to-one sessions they have with young people. Staff demonstrated they have a good understanding of the individual needs of the young people and the implications this has for their care. There was evidence of positive interactions between staff and young people.

Staff actively promote the education and achievement of the young people. For example, they are good at supporting and encouraging young people to attend their educational placements. Staff also ensure they have good links with these placements. A social worker said that staff maintain 'close communication' with educational placements and are 'very positive' when young people achieve success. Young people confirmed that staff make sure they get enough help with school and college work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are appropriate arrangements for reviewing the care and progress made by the young people. These include holding regular statutory reviews and providing regular written feedback to parents and social workers about young people's progress. Staff support the young people to contribute to their statutory reviews and they have regular contact with the young people's parents or carers. However, young people do not benefit from having placement plans that clearly set out their assessed needs and how staff will meet these needs.

Staff are good at supporting young people to maintain appropriate and constructive contact with their families and friends. Young people's placement plans include a clear record of the current agreed arrangements. Staff support and facilitate contact where appropriate.

There are clear procedures covering how staff should support young people when they move into and out of the home. Young people are encouraged to have introductory visits, including an overnight stay. Staff ensure young people receive suitable written information about the home and encourage them to bring appropriate personal possessions to personalise their rooms.

Staff are good at talking to young people about how the home is run and helping them to make decisions on matters that affect them. It is evident that staff take the views and opinions of the young people seriously and where possible and appropriate act upon them. For example, staff organised a trip away for the young people and some of their friends and they are helping young people to hold 'Come

Dine With Me' evenings. Young people confirmed that they are able to have a say about what happens in the home. Staff also consult parents and relevant professionals about the care provided to young people and how the home is run.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff are good at encouraging and supporting young people to develop the knowledge and skills they will need to move into independent or semi-independent living. They make sure the daily life of the home provides the young people with appropriate opportunities to do this. When asked what the home is good at doing, one young person said, 'helping with independence.' They described how they had been helped to develop practical skills such as changing a fuse. Staff also make up an 'independence pack' for each young person who moves on which is tailored to their individual needs and the area to which they will be moving.

The young people benefit from living in comfortable and homely accommodation. The general standard of repair, décor and furnishing is good. Each young person has their own bedroom and staff encourage them to personalise these by; for example, choosing the colour the walls are painted.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a Statement of Purpose that provides clear information about how it operates. There is also a young people's guide that provides a useful introduction to the home as well as important information such as how to complain or contact an independent advocate.

There are good arrangements for providing staff with training in caring for children and young people. All but one of the care staff have a suitable qualification confirming they have the competencies needed to care for young people. The member of staff that does not is applying to enrol on a relevant course of training. Apart from core training such as emergency first aid and positive behaviour management, staff can also access training that covers the specific needs of young people.

Staffing levels are good and enable staff to spend time meeting the individual needs of the young people. Whenever it is possible there is a mix of male and female staff on duty. The handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is good communication within the staff team and good on-call arrangements help make sure staff feel well supported.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs and preferences. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people and try to make sure their needs are being

met at all times.

There are good arrangements for the internal monitoring of the home and the care and welfare of the young people. For example, the Registered Manager monitors and signs the home's records each month to identify any patterns or issues that may need addressing. The Registered Manager makes sure that written reports describing the outcome of the monitoring also include feedback received from young people and surveys of parents and relevant professionals.

Young people's case files are properly kept and the records of their needs, development and progress reflect each young person's individuality.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that, when a child has been absent without authority, on their return to the home they are seen if possible by their social worker or a person independent of the home to consider the reasons for their absence. Where this is not possible ensure the reasons are recorded and agreed with the placing authority (NMS 19.4)
- ensure that the residential placement plan for each young person sets out clearly their assessed needs, how they are to be met on a day-to-day basis and the contribution to be made by the staff of the home. (NMS 2.1)