

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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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

A local authority operates the children home and it is registered to care for up to six children and young people of both genders, from the age of 13 up to 17-years-old.

The property is detached and located on a residential estate. Accommodation comprises of individual bedrooms for the young people, two comfortable lounges and a dining room. There is a patio and garden area to the rear of the building. Office space is separate.

The home's official function combines short-term care and assessment services as well as long-term permanency planning. Policies and the home's Statement of Purpose reflect this. At the time of the inspection, six young people were living at the home. It was possible to speak to two young people about the quality of care they receive.

The home is within easy travelling distance of community resources including parks, cinema, sports and athletics facilities. Bus routes connect the home with the local community and the national rail network. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This interim, unannounced inspection comments on the outcome areas staying safe and organisation. Progress against recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

Young people are experiencing stable placements and they are being looked after in a safe environment. There are no concerns relating to physical intervention and sanctions or safeguarding. A missing from home protocol works very well. Support to prevent bullying is coordinated well. There is transparent reporting of significant events. Notifications to Ofsted are being made in a timely manner. Actions taken in response to incidents at the home clearly safeguard residents welfare. There has been good use made of restorative justice approaches.

All staff are recruited correctly. The home's Registered Manager is experienced and fully qualified. Staff practice is well coordinated. Positive outcomes are achieved. Management have a written plan of action to improve the overall judgement. The success of this plan will be evaluated at the next key inspection.

This report highlights some recommendations to support practice developments.

Personnel information does not show how references are being verified and a file also contained a different reference to that outlined on the original application form. Robust procedures are not demonstrated. A new management system used to support staff personal development and appraisal is not yet fully implemented. Some management records, linking induction and supervision, are incomplete.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has taken appropriate action to resolve recommendations identified at the last inspection. The policy on storage of household medicines is now followed and only agreed medicines are held in the medicines cabinet. The premises fire risk assessment was updated and the next annual review is planned. The role of champions was defined and senior staff working at the home have delegated responsibility to develop practice linked to equality and diversity, education and health. A new management system was introduced to support staff personal development and appraisal. Staff with supervisory management responsibilities are becoming familiar with the new system.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There is a good body of evidence to show the home operates safely. There is a coordinated response to security, health and safety. Servicing schedules are programmed and all relevant certificates relating to fire precautions, electrical and gas installations and appliance testing are held. No hazards were observed to young people's safety. The home has a premises fire risk assessment. Fire precautions are clearly thought out and practise drills coincide with residents introductions. The public and employee liability insurance certificate is up to date.

Two new staff appointments have been made between inspections. Information shows that the recruitment process being followed is robust in most areas. Staff do not start work ahead of being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The process for verifying references was not made clear. One personnel file did not contain a suitable reference from the present employer. The reason for this was not made clear. Suitable vetting of visitors to the home is also undertaken, with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

The young people comment that they feel safe and confirm that they have access to safeguarding and complaints information. Arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. Some anti-bullying work has taken place

linked to a restorative justice approach. Good records support this work. Safeguarding policies are made clear and staff practice is reflective of the procedural guidance within these policies. Positive relationships and efficient supervision affords suitable safeguards to prevent most incidents. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives.

The peer group dynamic is managed well and the home continues to provide good quality care for all six residents. Meetings are convened to ensure young people remain focused. Good relationships are established and progress is being made in preparing residents for their futures. The moving on process is planned well. Young people have a good appreciation of and respect for staff and their peers. They are taking more responsibility for their behaviour. Rules and routines are clear and provide a suitable structure to each day. The importance of maintaining the correct group dynamic is recognised by the Registered Manager.

A suitable management response is taken to significant events that affect the home. Notifications are reported transparently and detailed records are maintained on each event.

Staff receive suitable training in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Policy and procedural guidance has been established that is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. There is a clear organisational policy on behaviour management. As part of the home's agreed safeguarding procedures the young people reflect on incidents that they are involved in. A police protocol is also in place to report young people absent without authority. Strategies used to reduce the number of times they are absent have been successful. New ideas, approaches and creative ways of working with the young people are regularly being introduced.

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 good.

Ofsted registered a new manager for this service in December 2010. The Registered Manager is experienced, competent, and holds relevant qualifications. The management team continue to reflect on services and ongoing developments continue to be made. An accurate self-evaluation was provided on the home's performance by the Registered Manager. This self-evaluation alongside the home's written development plan includes ideas to drive forward standards and further improve practice. The overall rating for the home will be reviewed at the next full inspection.

The staff and management team deliver a good standard of care. Efficient management of young people's needs has led to stable lifestyles being experienced. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations. The staff team understand and have the skills to support the needs of the young people. Staff are well motivated.

Good leadership is provided. The staff team demonstrate many competencies. There is a good pool of casual staff available. Deployment of staff is good. The staffing structure experienced few changes between inspections. Continuity with staff practice is good. Rotas demonstrate that staffing levels are being maintained. Staff are clear about their roles, balancing their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people are met whilst ensuring that the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken. Staff work hard to ensure each young person has a suitable structure to their day. Staff effectively organise the home's diary and communicate well with the young people to ensure they are aware of their appointments and commitments.

The home provides a safe and caring environment for young people. A clear child centred philosophy of care is evident. Staff continue to develop their skill sets and competence through access to training. There is access to National Vocational Qualification training at level 3 and 4 in care and management and new diploma training. These are recognised qualifications to work and manage children in a residential setting.

Records show satisfactory clarity in how staff are being managed. Induction and foundation training is provided. Tailored induction to meet the specific needs of staff is an area for development. Staff need to be more diligent in ensuring new staff members receive supervision at the appropriate frequency. A new management system was introduced for staff personal development and appraisal. This system is not yet fully implemented. The Registered Manager is working hard to ensure these systems become live.

Staff have good written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. Aims and objectives as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Staff

details are up to date. Records are easy to access within two office areas. There is good communication between all those supporting residents placements. It is clear that the young people are gaining good experiences to prepare them for the time that they leave.

Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Monthly reports are being produced and these provide comments on discussions that are taking place. These reports form part of the quality assurance systems being operated. There is good evaluation of the comments being made and this means areas for development continue to be identified. Record checks made by the Registered Manager help to establish accurate information on the home's operation, its management, and young people's progress. Changes to national minimum standards and inspection frameworks are being monitored. The home is in a good position to respond to change.

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 records clearly show how staff references are being verified (NMS 27)
- ensure there is a suitable explanation and signposting within personnel files if different references are received from those outlined on the original application form (NMS 27)
- ensure management systems used to support staff personal development and appraisal are fully implemented (NMS 28.7)
- ensure accurate management records, in particular, the correct supervision frequency is adhered to and induction is tailored to the specific needs of new staff members. (NMS 28.2, 31.2)