

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

This children's home is operated by a local authority and is registered to care for up to six children and young people of both genders, from the age of 13 years up to 17-years-old. At the time of the inspection, six young people were living at the home. It was possible to speak to two of them about the quality of care being received.

The home cares for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Services have also been developed to support young people in need, who are registered as refugees. The house is detached and situated a few miles from a large town centre. There are sufficient rooms, where the young people can pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. All bedrooms are single occupancy. The home was completely refurbished and extended in October 2007. Some of the large garden at the rear of the home was used for a bedroom extension and a conservatory.

The children and young people can gain access to parks, the cinema and sports and athletics facilities. Bus routes connect the home with the local community, places of worship and the national rail link. 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 area staying safe and organisation. Two inspectors from Ofsted visited the home. 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. There are no concerns linked to bullying. There is transparent reporting of significant events when they occur. Actions taken in response to incidents at the home clearly safeguard residents welfare. The standard of record keeping at this home is high. Information is well organised and accessible between two office areas.

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

This report highlights one recommendation to support practice developments. A

significant amount of change and possible disruption is affecting the home due to an ongoing restructuring and reorganisation of residential services operated by the responsible local authority. A robust plan is not yet evident to show how change will be managed.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has taken appropriate action to resolve recommendations identified at the last inspection.

Young people have improved access to the intranet and connections at the home have suitable safeguards to prevent access to inappropriate sites. There is clear evidence to demonstrate services are being shaped through evaluative and reflective practice. The quality of services continues to be developed beyond minimum standards. Records show that staff personal development, access to training and appraisal is being managed well.

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.

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. There are good links with independent listeners. There is no barrier with language for residents whose first language is not English. Interpreter and translator services are accessed when needed.

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. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives. A visiting social worker confirmed that a good standard of care was being delivered. It is clear that communication is effective between residential and field social work staff. Good records are maintained on all the work that takes place.

The peer group dynamic is managed well. Young people have a good appreciation of and respect for staff and their peers. The young people remain focused in their placements and progress is being made on many fronts. New ideas, approaches and creative ways of working with the young people are regularly being introduced. Residents are well prepared for their futures.

Young people take responsibility for their behaviour accepting the home's rules and routines. There is a clear organisational policy on behaviour management. There are no concerns linked to physical interventions. 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. 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. 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.

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.

There had been no new staff appointment between inspections. Information viewed previously shows that the recruitment process being followed is robust. Staff do not start work ahead of being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. Suitable vetting of visitors to the home is also undertaken, with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

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.

The Registered Manager was coordinating a response to change as a result of an ongoing organisational review and some restructuring. It is clear that the Registered Manager possesses the necessary skills to respond to 'challenges'. Staff morale remains good and the quality of practice at this home remains to a high standard. A new certificate was issued by Ofsted to show a change of responsible individual.

The Registered Manager is experienced, competent, and holds all relevant qualifications. A safe and caring environment is maintained. 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. Staff with a delegated lead role 'champion' work in key areas such as health, equality and diversity and planning for leaving care. This work helps to address residents specific needs. A clear child centred philosophy of care is evident. There is a growing body of evidence to show outstanding areas of practice. The overall rating for the home will be reviewed at the next full inspection.

Good leadership is provided. The staff team demonstrate many competencies. 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. The staff team understand and have the skills to support the needs of the young people. Staff remain well motivated. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations.

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. The future funding levels for training are being worked out. Two staff members are undertaking specific social pedagogy training. Some interesting concepts were discussed between staff members at a team meeting.

Records show satisfactory clarity in how staff are being managed. Induction and foundation training is provided. The frequency that supervision takes place is monitored by the Registered Manager. Supervision is clearly linked to staff personal development and appraisal. Records are maintained on the management support being provided.

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 under the leadership of the Registered Manager 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 the home's development plan identifies where change could affect the home's operation or resources as a result of the restructuring and reorganisation of the responsible local authority. (NMS 33.5)