

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Fiona Millns / Leonard Hird
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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 provides care and accommodation for up to three children, of either sex, aged 12 years to 17 years old.

The home is made up of two floors with the ground floor having a toilet and shower room, a lounge with a television, a dining room with a computer and a kitchen.

The first floor includes bedrooms, a staff office and a bathroom. There is an enclosed back garden equipped with outdoor furniture and a barbeque.

There were three children present during this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

The purpose of this unannounced key inspection was to look at the actions and recommendations from the last inspection and to inspect all key national minimum standards.

All outcomes for young people were inspected. Outcomes for being healthy, staying safe, economic well-being, positive contribution and organisation are satisfactory. The outcome for enjoying and achieving is good.

Young people feel they are supported and have positive relationships with staff. Young people are encouraged to attend education and have a good range of activities available to them. Young people are consulted and are involved in decisions about their care including planning for changes in the home.

The home have met all but one of the actions and recommendations from the last inspection. There are two actions and six recommendations arising from this inspection to improve outcomes for young people.

Care planning in the home has been developed effectively, including monitoring of health plans by health care professionals.

Not all child protection matters are reported by team managers to the appropriate person in accordance with the council's procedure.

How behaviour is managed, by the use of a financial penalty does not always comply with The Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

There are two actions and five recommendations arising from this visit.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the registered person has met nine out of the ten actions made in the inspection report.

Records detailing the curriculum vitae and Criminal Record Bureau checks of agency workers are appropriately maintained and the record is monitored by the registered manager on a monthly basis.

Notifications are made in accordance with Schedule 5 of The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 record outcome and include updates.

Health care plans are now incorporated into the children and young people's placement plans and these have been reviewed by health care professionals.

The staff notice board in the office no longer details any information about young people and staff have all received individual reminders and feedback about ensuring privacy and dignity.

The policy on countering bullying has been reviewed at team meeting and the anti-bullying co-ordinator has attended two staff meetings to discuss anti-bullying practice.

Staff have been updated at team meetings and individually on how to record the use of any measure of restraint control or discipline, including recording of the effectiveness of these measures.

Placement plans have been updated and social workers have been asked to approve and add their views to these.

Risk assessments for young people have been updated on a new format and are being regularly reviewed.

The Registered Manager has established a system whereby bi-monthly questionnaires are sent to young people their parents, social workers and all other relevant professionals as part of the monitoring action planning for improvements in the service.

There is one action that has not been met in full in that not all allegations or suspicions of abuse are referred as required by the Darlington Borough Council Child Protection Procedures. This action has been met by the Registered Manager who refers incidents appropriately but the procedure is not always followed by other managers within the council.

There were also 13 recommendations made, all of which are met.

The above outcomes for children will be reported on in the main body of this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have a good choice of healthy and nutritious meals. The home's menu accommodates the individual dietary needs of the young people. The young people confirm they enjoy the meals prepared at the home. A young person commented that, 'I am always given a choice of what I want to eat', another comment was, 'I have been encouraged to eat healthily.'

Records are maintained confirming visits to local doctors and other health services by the young people are occurring as required. Young people have their own personal health plans in place on their file and these are monitored by the home's staff and the local health authority.

Parental consents are in place for the administration of emergency first aid and the administration of medication. Members of staff receive regular training in first aid, the safe handling of medication and specialist health needs. A young person commented that, 'they make sure I keep my health appointments and give me my medication.' Members of staff are fully supporting the young people in meeting their health needs.

The administration, secure storage and disposal of medication is monitored and managed by members of staff, ensuring that the young people's health is not put at risk. Clear policies, procedures, risk assessments and guidance are in place for members of staff to deal with any health or dietary related issue which may occur in the home. The well-being, health and dietary needs of the young people are positively promoted at the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected and staff have taken appropriate action and received guidance in team meetings to adopt good practice. However, the home's daily log includes very detailed information about incidents and this is then copied into the electronic recording system by staff, taking up a lot of time.

Young people know how to complain and how to use advocacy services when required.

Young people are protected through the reporting of child protection incidents by the Registered Manager. Incidents where children have made allegations against staff are referred. However, some decisions on actions to be taken are made by team

managers and not by the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO). This has resulted in an allegation being wrongly recorded by a team manager as a complaint. This does not meet the requirements of the council's own child protection policy or complaints procedure.

Young people are effectively protected from bullying, including cyber bullying. Staff have received training updates from the anti-bullying co-ordinator and clear risk assessments are in place for all of the children and young people living at the home. Young people have been involved in developing a video about bullying to raise awareness and have identified what bullying means for them. This has given young people more confidence in reporting incidents.

There are effective procedures in place to look for young people who go missing, including the opportunity for young people to record the reasons why they went missing and for them to be interviewed by someone independent of the home on their return. The home has made good links with the local police to support vulnerable children who are at risk from going missing.

Notifications are appropriately made about significant incidents. The Registered Manager has adopted a procedure to review incidents and where necessary put in place individual plans for young people. Planning meetings following incidents are routinely held to inform and improve practice.

The use of sanctions is not always consistent or appropriate in complying with The Children's Homes Regulations 2001. There is a sanction on delaying pocket money which is a financial penalty and which is not effective as young people welcome this sanction in preference to others.

The recording of physical interventions is adequate. Interventions are used appropriately and minimally. They are recorded and monitored and young people are offered the opportunity to comment and to receive medical attention if they wish.

There are satisfactory procedures in place for the recruitment of staff to ensure that young people are protected, including regular updating of Criminal Records Bureau checks and verification of references.

Individual risk assessments include all known risks to young people to ensure they are kept safe from harm.

Risk assessments for the premises and necessary checking of equipment are in place to minimise any risk from environmental factors in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Good practice at the home ensures that each young person receives individual support. Placement plans reflect the needs of young people and are linked to the

statutory and informal reviewing process occurring at the home.

The home operates a key worker system. Staff have a sound knowledge of individual young people's needs. Young people confirm that they are comfortable in approaching any member of staff for support or help. Young people are offered various opportunities to be involved in identifying what type of individual support they need. This enables young people to feel valued and listened to.

Each young person has their own personal education plan. The home's staff positively encourage young people to attend school and persevere with their studies.

Young people can access a number of different leisure activities and are assisted by staff where necessary. One young person is very keen on water based activities and staff are actively encouraging this interest. The young people have also held their own 'come dine with me' evenings combining a social event with an opportunity to develop their cooking skills. Young people have access to a computer to undertake schoolwork or pursue personal interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have a placement plan which details how the home will address their care needs. There are good arrangements in place for reviewing and recording the care and progress made by the young people. Where appropriate, members of staff support the young people to contribute to these reviews. There are satisfactory consultation and communication systems in place between the home and the young people's families. This enables staff to keep parents informed about the care and support needs of the young people.

There are number of different opportunities for young people to be listened to on how the home is run. These are occurring through the home's system of planned young people's meetings as well as the informal daily meetings with staff and through the monitoring and consultation processes which have been put in place by the Registered Manager. Staff are committed to listening to and involving the young people in making decisions about their life at the home. This is demonstrated through the involvement of the young people in the anti-bullying work of the council and in their involvement in plans for decorating and the refurbishment of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

This small home is clean, well furnished, satisfactorily equipped and reasonably decorated throughout and provides a safe environment for young people to live in. Young people have their own personalised bedroom. Each bedroom has a single bed, seating area and storage space. There are adequate levels of bathing, showering and toileting facilities available in the home for use by young people. The house has

limited communal space which does not include somewhere where children can see visitors in private. Staff have separate sleeping-in and bathing facilities. There is a commitment by members of staff and young people to maintaining a homely environment by treating the facilities with respect.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The young people's guide and Statement of Purpose detail how the home operates and is managed. The information in these documents is presented in a way that can be easily understood by young people and their families. The manager, assisted by the staff team, is ensuring that the home is adequately organised and managed and run in line with the Statement of Purpose.

Staff are provided with good opportunities for training in caring for children and young people. Many of the staff have achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 Caring for Children and Young People award or higher. Staff undertake regular core training in areas, such as first aid, behaviour management and fire safety. Staff also have opportunities for training within their team meetings. Staff spoken with confirmed that they were receiving regular training and recorded supervision.

Staffing levels at the home are sufficient to meet the identified needs of the young people however, staff sometimes spend unnecessary time duplicating the daily log entries for the home. Where required, to meet the needs of the young people, the Registered Manager may increase staffing levels. When agency staff are used to cover long-term staff absences the home ensures that all necessary recruitment checks have been carried out and the home tries, wherever possible, to use the same member of staff to maintain continuity of staffing to reduce the potential of disruption to the children.

Regulation 33 visitors carry out regular monitoring visits to the home and provide reports.

The Registered Manager monitors the home every month and prepares a report and action plan. The home has introduced questionnaires to seek the views of young people, parents and other professionals. These are available in formats that encourage participation. The questionnaires are themed and can be used effectively towards the development of the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Members of staff have received training in the promotion of equality and diversity as part of their professional development programme. Members of staff have a good understanding of the needs of the young people living in this care environment and ensure the young people are treated as individuals. However, placement plans are not fully reflective of the cultural and identity needs of the young people. The work of the staff team is supported by the policies and procedures of the local authority in the

promotion of equality and diversity.

Young people's individual case files are securely stored and are arranged in a manner which makes them easily accessible to members of staff. Those files examined were being satisfactorily monitored and managed.

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
17	make sure the responsible individual ensures the prompt referral to the local authority which is, or maybe, making child protection enquiries in relation to any child accommodated in the children's home (Regualtion 16 (2) (b))	23/12/2010
22	ensure that no measure of control, restraint or discipline which is excessive, unreasonable or contrary to paragraph (5) of Regulation 17 shall be used at any time on children accommodated in a children's home.	23/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that measures of control are fair and consistently applied (NMS 22.3)
- ensure the records of complaints are reviewed and ensure necessary further follow up action in relation to individual cases.
- ensure cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met, are detailed in placement plans (NMS 2.1)
- ensure there are rooms in which children can meet privately with visitors and space for private activities, play and recreation which do not affect other children's routine activities (NMS 24.15)
- ensure staff rotas have time scheduled to ensure that handover sessions, spending time with individual children, completion of records, planning and carrying out of care programmes occur without compromising overall care of children. (NMS 29.6)