

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC040631
Inspection date	28 June 2010
Inspector	John Chivers
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	14 September 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

The home is managed by the county council and is one of a number of children's homes administered by the local authority. The home is registered to accommodate a maximum of nine children of either gender aged between nine and 14 years on admission. The home is situated in the village centre and close to local facilities and amenities. Admissions are generally planned, although in exceptional circumstances an emergency admission may be considered where the child falls within the home's admission criteria.

The home provides a caring and supportive service to children with a wide range of needs.

Summary

The inspection was a full inspection and unannounced. All of the key standards in the sections being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were inspected on this occasion. The one recommendation made at the last inspection was found to have been met in full and two recommendations are made as a result of this inspection. The home is organised and managed to a good standard and affords a high standard of care and support to the children, having full regard for equality and diversity issues throughout all aspects of its operation.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the Registered Manager was asked to ensure the home's generic risk assessments are reviewed and updated. This has now occurred with review and updates from November 2009 to date, which will help provide a fully risk-assessed service.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have a balanced, varied and healthy diet and any special religious, cultural or preferential diets are catered for. Posters and information about healthy foods are displayed. Children have the opportunity to shop for provisions and may help to prepare snacks and some meals under staff supervision. The kitchen is clean and hygienic and provisions are safely and correctly stored with refrigerator and freezer temperatures taken and recorded on a daily basis. Children said they enjoy the meals at the home and the food is always good.

There is a range of health and medical-related policies and procedures which are available and accessible to staff. The home has full regard for health and medical matters concerning the children and ensures these areas are monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis. A General Practitioner is available to the home, as are other health and medical-related professionals. Parental consent for medical and emergency treatment is held, although there was one omission in the sample of children's files inspected. Children benefit from staff who are diligent in these areas and who encourage them to live active and healthy lifestyles. There are clear health care plans contained within children's general care plans and health care risk assessments are also held.

Children receive medication and first aid as appropriate from staff who are trained in such areas. Medication administration records are clear, detailed and have no gaps in recording. Medication is safely and correctly stored in locked cabinets within a locked cupboard which also has storage provision for controlled drugs. Children said staff look after their health and ensure medication is administered when necessary.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are aware of the importance of confidentiality, and private and confidential records are securely held. Staff treat children with dignity, respect their privacy and afford them close supervision without this being intrusive.

There is a clear, detailed and child-friendly complaints procedure to which parents and children have unrestricted access. The complaints procedure is reinforced to staff periodically at team meetings. The home's complaints book is available which shows any complaints are recorded in detail and include action taken and an outcome. Children said they know how to make a complaint but were clear that they have no concerns about the way staff treat them or the standard of care they receive, saying openly they are happy in the home and like living there.

The home has a comprehensive child protection and safeguarding policy and procedure and all staff are regularly trained in this area. Staff are diligent regarding the supervision of children and reinforce aspects of their personal safety on a regular basis. The manager said there are no current child protection or safeguarding issues in the home, although detailed recording and appropriate notifications are made in the event. Children said they feel safe and protected in the home and that staff have a keen interest in their safety and well-being.

The homely, friendly and supportive standard of care, coupled with the close supervision afforded to the children, help reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring and children in discussion confirm there are no significant issues in this area. There is a clear anti-bullying policy and staff are very alert to any such behaviour. There is a range of anti-bullying literature and help and advice lines should children wish to refer an issue externally. Children are clear that bullying is not an issue in the home and that staff are quick to challenge and address such conduct.

The home has clear policies and procedures regarding missing persons, although unauthorised absences are not a significant issue regarding the current group of children at the home.

Children's behaviour is well managed by staff who receive regular training in behaviour management. There are sound relationships between staff and children with consistent interaction and engagement evident. Children respond positively to staff requests and instructions and all of the current children are within the home's remit in terms of behaviour management and control. Sanctions and restraint are clearly recorded and any such incidents appear appropriate and necessary in the circumstances described in the records. Children said the standard of discipline in the home is fair and that sanctions and restraint are sparingly used.

Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the home and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed. The home's health and safety arrangements are sound and help protect children, staff and visitors from the inherent risks of fire and other potential safety hazards.

No new staff have been appointed since the last inspection when the home's recruitment and vetting procedures were shown to be robust and sound, therefore staff recruitment files were not revisited on this occasion. The home's recruitment and vetting procedures help to ensure only suitable staff are employed to look after the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children receive an excellent level of support from their key workers and staff who meet with children on a daily basis. While no formal key work sessions take place this does not detract from the high level of care, commitment and support provided. In addition, children benefit from inputs from a range of external professionals as appropriate and the commendable practice of each child being allocated an independent visitor.

Key workers have liaison responsibilities with other professionals and agencies, and prepare reports for statutory reviews and write and update care plans, having full regard for equality and diversity issues within the holistic care of individual children. Children said their key workers do a lot for them and help them out with any problems or difficulties they may experience and provide advice and support in all aspects of daily living.

Children receive close support and encouragement regarding education and learning in out-of-school time and a wide range of interesting and stimulating activities are available to them. Children attend local schools and tuition is arranged for those who may be excluded from school. Copies of children's personal education plans are held and also statements of special educational needs as appropriate. Staff liaise closely with schools that children attend and also attend school functions, events and educational reviews. Children said staff are interested in their education and encourage and help them with homework.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children benefit from having clear and informative care plans in place which are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by their key workers. Contingency plans also form part of the care plan should the placement break down or unforeseen circumstances occur. There is provision within the care plans for equality and diversity needs. Children said they are aware of their care plans and that staff follow these and keep them informed of any progress or issues.

Statutory reviews are held within the prescribed timescales and children can make a verbal and written contribution and attend the review meetings as appropriate. Key workers make a valuable contribution to the review reports which are informative and cover a range of areas and set clear action points.

Any contact that children have with their parents and significant others is clearly recorded.

The home has a new referral system which has been very recently introduced by the county council and this will be closely monitored by the home. Currently the home caters mainly for planned admissions although occasionally emergency admissions may be catered for. Planned admissions usually have one or two visits to the home prior to permanent placement. Children leave the home in a planned way following agreed timescales and decisions made at statutory reviews. Older children receive social and life skills training as appropriate and the home also

liaises with other agencies as appropriate regarding children returning home, to a family placement or to another form of provision.

Children are afforded the opportunity for consultation, choice and to voice their opinions through one-to-one discussions with staff and via questionnaires. Children confirm their views and opinions are listened to and acted upon by staff. Children have appropriate risk assessments in place regarding matters that carry a degree of risk.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home does not prepare children for leaving care, although clear transition plans form part of children's care plans regarding any planned moves from the home. Staff also liaise with appropriate agencies and individuals regarding such moves.

Children receive pocket money on a sliding age scale and clear records of transactions are kept by staff. Children also receive a clothing allowance and have access to personal requisites such as toiletries and cosmetics which they keep in their bedrooms. Children are well presented in age and fashion-appropriate clothes.

Children live in a safe and very well-maintained environment where communal areas are decorated and furnished to a high standard, are homely and comfortable and provide good communal space for the children. Bedrooms are of a good standard and are personalised to varying standards by their occupants. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford good privacy. The home's grounds are spacious and well maintained. Children said they are satisfied with the standard of accommodation, have comfortable beds to sleep in and like living in the home. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the home and no safety hazards are evident in the areas of the premises accessed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good, with children having their diversity needs understood and met by staff.

Children and parents are provided with sufficient information about the service by a comprehensive Statement of Purpose which accurately describes the service and facilities provided; however, this is currently being amended to reflect an increase in the home's upper admission age range from 13 years to 14 years. There is an excellent children's guide which provides an abundance of information and is written in a child-friendly style.

The home is well staffed and staff duty rosters give a clear account of staff on duty and duty times worked. Children benefit from having a minimum of three staff on duty at any one time and two sleeping-in staff and one waking night staff on duty throughout the night. The staff team are an established and experienced group who work in a professional, committed and competent manner, enabling the home to meet its aims and objectives. Children receive care and support from a well trained staff team who are appropriately supervised, although there has been some slippage in the frequency of some formal staff supervision sessions of late. Despite this, it does not detract from the high level of care and support afforded to the children. Currently 86% of the home's staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

Staff are supportive of the home's management and ethos and are clear that the provision has full regard for equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service. There is good communication between staff, with handover sessions being held twice a day and formal staff team meetings held monthly.

The manager and deputy monitor the service on a regular basis and sign appropriate records. Regulation 33 monthly visits occur and reports on the visits are forwarded to the home and to Ofsted. These arrangements ensure the home's quality assurance systems are sound and effective. In addition, questionnaires are received from parents and children to assist further in this area. Children's individual case files are organised and maintained to a good standard and hold all statutory information. The home has a comprehensive annual development plan for the year 2009-10 and holds a current insurance liability certificate which complies with the county council's legal responsibilities as an employer.

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

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the outstanding signed parental consent form is obtained from the placing social authority (NMS 13.4)
- ensure all staff supervision is maintained at the required frequency. (NMS 28.2)