

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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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 home is managed and run by the local authority and located in a town with easy access to shops and local facilities. It provides residential care for six young people aged between 10 and 17 years. Ground floor accommodation comprises a lounge, sitting and dining room, breakfast kitchen, craft room and computer room. The office is situated across a courtyard in a separate building. On the first floor there are six single bedrooms and two bathrooms. There are gardens to the front and rear of the house.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced interim inspection in which the key standards in the outcome area of staying safe were assessed. Progress on actions and recommendations made at the previous inspection in December 2010 was also checked.

The overall judgement from the key inspection in December 2010 is changed from good to satisfactory. This is due to the satisfactory judgement for the outcome area of staying safe for this interim visit.

Young people say that they feel well cared for and are positive about their relationships with staff. However, recent admissions to the home have caused high levels of disruption and change and potentially impact on the welfare of young people. There are some significant shortfalls in the recording processes. Accountability for the use of restraint, using disciplinary measures and checking the welfare of young people when they return from going missing is not clear. Similarly records relating to alternative storage of fire fighting equipment are not evident. Three actions and two recommendations are set as a result of this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home was asked to meet some shortfalls in recruitment and selection records and this is addressed, as is the monthly frequency of staff meetings. Staff training in the management of medication has been arranged in order to improve safe medication procedures.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people say they are usually safe at the home and their welfare is promoted. However, they feel the usual arrangements to promote their safety and their enjoyment of living at the home are significantly compromised by the recent admission of specific young people to the home. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff and feel their behaviour is well managed and improved since coming to live at the home. However, over recent months they say they have witnessed serious incidents of violence and disruption. They are concerned about their own safety and that of the staff, due to the challenging behaviour of other young people. Young people are adamant that staff do everything they can to offer protection. They say staff help them with their behaviour but they continue to be upset and unhappy by the changes in the home. They feel they get to spend less time with staff and never really know what is going to happen next due to the unpredictability of some young people's behaviour.

All young people living at the home are supported in improving their behaviour. Behaviour management procedures and staff training are focused on working with young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. There are currently some young people who present additional needs in terms of learning disabilities and behaviours that potentially go beyond the usual remit of the service. Consequently there is a broad expanse of varying needs, presenting behaviours, challenging incidents and required responses from staff. There are high levels of physical interventions and restraints by staff on some young people. Additionally staff supervision for some young people is high. Their behaviour requires consistent attention, supervision and intervention by staff. Staff set clear boundaries and are keen to look for and reward positive and improved behaviour. Young people say they get rewarded for good behaviour and they value their relationships with staff. They see significant improvements in their behaviour including not going missing from care, not getting so angry and talking things through, coping in education and enjoying improved relationships with family and friends. Young people acknowledge that consequences for when their own behaviour is not so good are fair. However, they also express some confusion about how other young people's behaviour is managed because of different needs. Some young people identify that they have to pay for damage to the home and have sanctions such as a delayed activity. However, they are unclear if this is the case for other young people in the home. Young people are also disconcerted about the levels of physical interventions in the home as this not usually the case. Recording formats for the use of sanctions and physical interventions are not fully accountable and are inconsistently maintained.

Young people are experiencing some levels of disruption in their daily lives due to challenging behaviour and risk from some young people. However, all the young people living at this service are safeguarded from potential hazards as staff have a good understanding of health and safety procedures. Risk assessment and management strategies are developed and documented in relation to young people's known and potential risk-taking behaviours. This includes the potential for bullying, going missing from care, aggressive behaviour and risk in the community.

Young people are protected by satisfactory safeguarding arrangements. There are clear policies and procedures on promoting the welfare and safety of young people and these are implemented by well-trained staff. Training includes safeguarding young people, behaviour management and maintaining a safe environment for young people and staff. There are clear going missing from care procedures. While young people's safety is monitored by positive working relationships with the police and other agencies, recording in the home shows poor accountability. There is no written evidence to demonstrate that safe and well interviews are carried out when young people return to the home. Staff are fully aware of the reporting procedures should there be a serious incident in the home.

Young people understand there is a strong staff commitment to protect them from bullying and discrimination. Young people are encouraged and enabled to understand how individuals are different. They understand the importance of clear boundaries and consequences regarding bullying, poor language and discriminatory attitudes. Young people are protected with an accessible and clear complaints process. They say they know how to complain and are confident that staff will listen to their concerns. Young people's privacy is valued and promoted, they have keys to their bedrooms, staff knock on bedroom doors before entering and records are kept securely in the staff office.

Young people and the staff know what to do in the event of a fire. Environmental and fire safety checks are consistently carried out and recorded. However, some actions taken with regards to fire safety are not included in the home's fire risk assessment. For example, safety procedures regarding the secure storage of fire fighting equipment are not recorded and therefore safe practice relies on word of mouth from staff who work in the home, potentially placing young people at risk.

Young people are safeguarded by robust staff recruitment procedures. All required checks are undertaken prior to staff commencing work in the home. Visitors to the home are scrutinised and required to confirm and record their identity.

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 not judged.

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
22	ensure the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11(1)(a))	29/04/2011
22	ensure the home's records of restraint and sanctions meet the recording requirements as set down in regulation 17 (Regulation 17)	29/04/2011
26	make adequate arrangements for extinguishing fires and reviewing fire precautions at suitable intervals. (Regulation 32(1))	29/04/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide records for the circumstances of all incidents of absconding, all action taken by staff, the circumstances of the child's return, any reasons given by the

child for absconding, and any action taken in the light of those reasons (NMS 19.6)

- ensure the home's records of restraint and sanctions meet the recording requirements as set down in NMS 22. (NMS 22)