

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Anne Bannister
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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 a large, two-storey detached house set in its own grounds in a quiet village, situated within easy travelling distance of large local towns. It is registered to accommodate three children or young people of either gender. Each child or young person is allocated their own individual bedroom at the home. The home is maintained and furnished to a high standard.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The inspection was carried out on an unannounced basis and the home was inspected against all of the key national minimum standards for children's homes. The home provides an environment for young people within which they feel safe and are well cared for. Staff at the home engage positively with young people, they operate very effectively as a team and are well able to meet the needs of young people being cared for. There are close working relationships with external agencies which benefit young people, healthy lifestyles are encouraged and routine and specific health needs are suitably addressed. Young people are happy living at the home, they are being appropriately consulted and feel listened to by staff.

Actions arising from this report relate to staff needing to address health needs identified in statutory reviews and the need to ensure that the education section of placement plans fully reflects the work staff are undertaking to promote young people's education.

Improvements since the last inspection

One action was raised following the previous inspection. This has been addressed by ensuring restrictors have been fitted on all windows on the upper floor of the building.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people at the home are encouraged to eat healthily and are provided with opportunities to shop for food and assist with meal preparation. They are also able to make themselves snacks and drinks. Those young people preparing for the transition to independence are provided with a budget and prepare their own meals. Adequate quantities of food are provided for young people and records show a balanced diet is

being promoted. Staff are suitably trained in food hygiene and handling.

There is good provision at the home for promoting the physical and emotional well-being of young people and for addressing their routine and specific health needs. Relationships with the local surgery are good and young people confirm they are able to see a doctor whenever they need to. Good support is provided by the local looked after children nurse, and external health professionals are referred to and involved with young people according to their needs. However, one young person's file evidenced that recommendations from a December review relating to health needs were yet to be addressed by staff. Staff routinely provide information, guidance and support for young people in relation to health matters, including major risks to health such as smoking, alcohol and drugs. Young people confirm that staff actively discourage them from all types of substance abuse.

Provision at the home for the management and administration of medication provides suitable safeguards for the welfare of young people. Medication is stored securely, records of administration are well maintained, and there are appropriate procedures in place for those young people wishing to self-medicate. All staff at the home have undertaken first aid training, and accidents are well recorded and monitored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home provides an environment for young people within which they feel safe and where they are suitably protected from harm. Young people confirm that bullying is not a problem within the home and indicate that staff respect their privacy appropriately.

There are established relationships with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The staff team have a good awareness of the procedures to follow should they have any concerns relating to child protection and there is easy access to supporting policy and procedure documents. There have been no safeguarding referrals since the last inspection.

The expectations of behaviour are made clear to young people upon arrival at the home and they are actively encouraged and supported by staff to develop positive and socially acceptable behaviours. Young people are fairly treated by staff who use behaviour incentive schemes and apply sanctions in accordance with the home's policy. The use of physical intervention is always a last resort. Incidents of physical intervention are at a low level within the home and are well recorded. Staff always use their skills in de-escalation to try to avoid any use of physical intervention. All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention techniques. Individual risk assessments identify the risks young people pose to themselves and others.

The home's complaints log showed one complaint having been received since the previous inspection. The situation had been resolved to the young person's

satisfaction. Young people are provided with appropriate information in relation to complaints and are well aware of how to make a complaint should they wish to. Young people advise that most issues are sorted out informally.

The home provides a safe and secure physical environment for young people. There is good provision for addressing health and safety matters, including managing risks associated with the premises. Weekly health and safety checks are carried out, an up-to-date fire risk assessment is in place, and all checks and tests of fire safety equipment are being carried out and recorded as required. Young people are made aware of fire evacuation procedures and records show drills are being carried out at the required intervals.

Staff recruitment procedures provide appropriate safeguards for the welfare of young people. There have been no new staff appointed since the previous inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is good provision at the home for making individual support available to young people according to their needs. All young people have a designated key worker who has certain responsibilities towards them. This does not preclude them from spending quality time with any member of the staff team. Staff are acutely aware of the needs of individual young people at the home and individual care plans show how these are being addressed. Independent advocates are appointed for young people when necessary and there is good access to a range of external specialist services as required. These include the Connexions service, the local looked after children nurse, a drugs advisory service and child and adolescent mental health services.

The home works to achieve positive outcomes for all young people in relation to their education. Staff work closely with schools and colleges attended by young people. Support is provided with homework when necessary and educational reviews and school events are attended by staff from the home. Further education placements and other relevant provision is pursued for those young people not of statutory school age. A computer is available to young people. However, the education part of the placement plan fails to reflect the significant support young people in further education receive.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have individual placement plans which identify the overall plans for their future. In-house care planning includes individual risk assessments, behaviour management plans and care plans identifying specific targets young people are working towards.

Statutory reviews are held at the required intervals, with young people, parents, placing social workers, staff from the home and involved professionals all being able to contribute to the process. Reports of reviews are maintained on young people's case records.

There is good provision for enabling young people to maintain contact with their families and friends while at the home. Contact arrangements are clearly recorded and staff are fully aware of any restrictions in place. Staff are good at supporting young people to maintain constructive contact with their families and friends.

The home has clear procedures for admissions. Planned admissions provide for a gradual introduction to the home with the opportunity to visit, to be given relevant information about the home and to complete an induction programme alongside staff. Young people have recently developed a welcome DVD, which introduces young people to the care and facilities they can expect when living in the home.

Staff were observed to engage young people positively and to have good relationships with them. Young people were seen to be able to communicate freely and openly with staff and to express their views and opinions. They are routinely involved and consulted as part of the statutory reviewing process, and attend and contribute to meetings held concerning them and their future. The parent company is encouraging young people to have more input into how the company develops. The introduction of a youth board ensures that representatives from each of the homes have access to senior managers every three months. These meetings ensure young people's views are considered when any developments are being planned.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The staff team works closely with local authority leaving care teams and other external agencies in order to prepare young people for the transition into independent or semi-independent living. The home has developed a programme which assists young people with the transition to independence. Staff encourage and support young people within the home to acquire necessary life skills. This was observed during the inspection. The staff team work cooperatively to the pathway plan for young people preparing to leave care. This ensures that young people receive the care and support they need to prepare them for moving on from the home.

The home provides accommodation which reflects a domestic-style environment. Young people benefit from having their own bedrooms, two of which provide en-suite facilities. The rooms provide adequate space, which young people are able to personalise and where they can spend time in private. The home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard and provides facilities which adequately meet the needs of the young people living there. Public transport and community facilities are easily accessible to young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has an up-to-date Statement of Purpose and children's guide which provide clear and detailed information for young people, parents and placing authorities about the home and how it operates. The staff group at the home comprise a mix of suitably qualified and experienced members, with the remainder undertaking professional qualifications. They are well able to meet the needs of young people being cared for and they operate very effectively as a close knit and supportive team.

There is good support provided by the home's manager, supervision takes place regularly and there are good training opportunities provided. The Registered Managers within the company have not been receiving professional supervision within the required frequency. This issue was raised during an inspection of another home in the group and a plan has recently been implemented which addresses this deficit.

There are always sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of young people and levels of staffing are increased to meet specific identified needs when necessary. Suitable arrangements are in place for deputising in the manager's absence and a duty rota provides for obtaining senior support at all times. There is a high level of consistency provided by the staff team with regular bank staff being used to cover for sickness and absence. Communication between staff is very good with handovers taking place between shifts and there are regular staff meetings.

Easy access is provided to the home's policies and procedures and Regulation 33 visits take place monthly as required with reports being available within the home. The home's manager has a monitoring system in place that includes both weekly and monthly checks of documentation. However, the home's quality monitoring has not been sufficiently stringent to identify deficits raised in this report.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are aware that young people present a diverse range of needs and strive to ensure these are well addressed. Documentation shows a clear commitment to providing equal opportunities and to tackling discrimination of any form. Staff actively challenge discriminatory remarks and promote diversity in doing so. Young people report being fairly and equally treated.

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
12	ensure each child has access to the medical service they require. Specifically this relates to staff ensuring a prompt response to actions identified in annual reviews in relation to identified health needs (Regulation 20(b))	30/04/2011
14	ensure that where a child has attained the age where they are no longer required to receive compulsory full-time education documentation maintained confirms the arrangements made for their education and training. (Regulation 18(3))	30/04/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure documentation relating to room searches is signed by all staff involved in the process. (NMS 9.8)