

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 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

This is one of a number of residential homes, which are owned and managed by the County Council. It is a six bed children's home, situated in a rural location on the outskirts of a town. It provides accommodation and care for young people of both genders, aged from 12 years old up to 17 years old. Access to all local amenities and the town centre, is catered for by transport from the home and a driver is employed at key times of the day to achieve this. The home is a large, detached property with spacious grounds, including an extensively grassed area, which may be used by young people. Young people are all accommodated in single bedrooms and share all communal recreation areas and bathroom and toilet facilities.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection and so all the key national minimum standards were assessed. Two recommendations were followed up from the previous inspection.

Many aspects of the care provided to young people are outstanding with the remainder being judged as good.

Young people's assessed needs are met by staff who have developed strong, positive relationships with the young people and their carers. The staff team work closely with a wide range of outside agencies in order to meet the range of needs presented by young people. Young people spoken to are positive about the care they receive in the home. They indicate that staff are helping them to look at the way they react to situations, so that they respond in a more appropriate manner.

Young people are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. The practices implemented within the home ensure that young people's health and dietary needs are very well met. The life skills used within leisure activities assist young people to develop skills, which will support their independence and link into planned education programmes.

Where actions and recommendations have been raised, they relate to inadequacies in documentation that fails to fully evidence the good practices implemented by staff when working with young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were two recommendations raised at the previous inspection. The Registered Manager had promptly responded to them. Both staff and young people are aware that when young people complain informally, documentation must evidence that young people are satisfied with the action staff to resolve the issue. The manner in which health plans are updated evidences that staff ensure young people's identified health needs are addressed within appropriate timescales.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people take an active role in planning menus and assisting with food preparation. Those on independence programmes will budget, shop and prepare their own meals. This is seen as key to supporting the development of their independent life skills. Individual preferences, along with any specific dietary needs are accounted for. The home promotes healthy eating and this is reflected in the planned menus. Staff organise cultural evenings to develop young people's knowledge of lifestyles in other countries. Meals are relaxed, social occasions enjoyed by both staff and young people.

Young people's health needs are thoroughly assessed. Health information is obtained from placing social workers, so that staff have a clear understanding of the young people's health needs and how these are to be met. Health plans are detailed documents, addressing specific personalised needs. Practice in the home is for all young people to be registered with local health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and optician. The home operates procedures that comply with the administration and safekeeping of medicines. These are effectively monitored by a senior member of staff. All staff administering medicines have received appropriate training.

Young people speak positively about the manner in which their health needs are addressed. Statutory medical examinations are organised. Specialist advice and help is organised, when needed, to support specific identified health needs. Positive health promotion by staff ensures young people receive advice and information, which will help them to make positive choices relating to relationships, drugs and alcohol.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff team are highly committed to ensuring that young people in their care are protected from harm.

Staff receive training in relation to the privacy and confidentiality wishes of the young people. Secure cabinets in the home ensure that confidential records are kept safely. Young people's bedrooms and bathrooms have doors with locks, so that privacy can be maintained. These actions ensure that young people's rights are protected, in relation to maintaining their rights of privacy and confidentiality.

Staff take seriously concerns and complaints raised by young people. Young people spoken to know what to do if they are unhappy about something. They know how to make a formal complaint but indicate issues are generally solved by speaking to staff informally and they 'sort it'. The home has also provided young people with an independent visitor who visits once per month and who will raise any issues on their behalf.

All care staff spoken to have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures. A rolling programme of safeguarding training for all staff has been put into place, to ensure that they have and they continue to maintain the skills to protect young people from abuse. The home maintains detailed records of any incidents made under safeguarding guidelines and ensures notifications are made to the appropriate authorities. These actions show that the home has appropriate practices, policies and procedures in place, to protect young people from abuse.

There is a clear and comprehensive behaviour management policy, which is consistently used by all staff. All staff have been trained in behaviour management techniques and they are

skilled at diverting young people's negative behaviours into a more positive activity. All physical interventions and sanctions imposed in response to unacceptable behaviours are appropriately recorded and are monitored by the senior managers, to identify trends in behaviours and to ensure staff consistency. However, the manner of recording the effectiveness of sanctions used, does not reflect the level of discussion which takes place within the staff team concerning the effectiveness. A recommendation has been made in relation to this issue. There is also evidence that not all staff are completing this part of the sanction book and an action has been made in relation to this.

Following any incident of physical intervention, behaviour management plans are reviewed. This is to consider whether the intervention has been effective and to look at alternative strategies to be used in the future. The aim is to defuse and divert future incidents, in a manner which makes physical intervention unnecessary and keeps young people safe.

The home has a written procedure for how staff must respond when young people are absent without authority. There is careful monitoring of the number of instances where this occurs and actions are taken by staff, to try to ensure that young people are not continuing to place themselves at risk by this practice. There have been a number of recent incidents of young people resorting to this behaviour. There is clear evidence that the home is working with other agencies to address the risks young people are placing themselves in by their behaviours.

Evidence and observation shows that the home has a responsible attitude towards health and safety matters. The home has risk assessments in place for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds. There are also risk assessments relating to young people's behaviours and planned activities they undertake. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated, to ensure young people's continued safety. Visitors are welcomed into the school, once they have satisfied staff of their identity and the purpose of their visit and when they have signed the visitors book. All fire drills, fire alarm tests and fire safety equipment checks are up to date. All gas and electrical appliances receive an annual check. However, changes in health and safety regulations have resulted in a recommendation being made that the home determines whether the height of the upper banister rail continues to meet regulations. A further health and safety issue was identified during the course of the inspection and was dealt with immediately by the manager. The home's actions show that there is a commitment to ensuring young people live in a safe and secure environment.

Recruitment files examined, indicate that the organisation operates appropriate recruitment procedures that meets with the requirements of the Children's Homes Regulations. This shows that all reasonable steps are taken, to ensure that staff employed are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Observation of staff practice and documentation seen, indicates that young people receive personalised support. The home has well established links with a range of outside agencies that supports young people in developing a positive view of themselves and others. Young people indicate that staff are approachable and that there is always someone on duty who they would approach if they needed help or advice. Staff spoken to are knowledgeable about young people's individual needs.

Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Whilst reluctance may be shown by some young people to engage positively with their education, staff are proactive in encouraging and arranging school attendance. Young people accommodated at the home have an education programme devised specifically for them to meet their individual educational needs. Detailed personal education plans are produced. The home's educational coordinator has good links with the teaching staff and ensures that staff within the home act quickly to support young people if any difficulties arise. Each young person will leave the home with a record of achievement. Feedback from education providers is that the staff at the home motivate and support young people to attain their academic potential. The staff team is very skilled at recognising and celebrating young people's achievements and personal successes. These actions show young people's educational needs are appropriately addressed.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Systems are in place, to ensure that young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. All young people have detailed residential action plans in place, which concentrate on how their needs are to be addressed and the roles and responsibilities of other key individuals in the young person's life. The plan is based on an assessment of their needs and detailed risk assessments. They are comprehensive documents, which clearly evidence the targets set to attain positive outcomes for all young people in the home's care. The young people's files clearly evidence the amount of support staff give them to address and meet their assessed needs. Young people, social workers and key other professionals and family members are involved in monitoring and reviewing the plans. The management team works hard to ensure that young people are fully involved in all decisions affecting their lives.

Young people are encouraged to maintain contact with family and key other friends, in line with their placement plans and staff give practical support in making this possible. Staff in the home work closely with young people's families. Young people and staff are keen to promote a positive impression to the local community and to involve themselves in fund raising activities for local charities, as well as in community activities. Since the last inspection, staff and young people have completed a triathlon to raise funding for local cancer charities. All are very proud of their achievements, which raised a significant amount of money and promotes a positive image for looked after children.

Young people have several different opportunities to raise issues with the care staff team. These include one-to-one sessions with their key worker and formal weekly unit meetings. There is evidence of a warm, caring relationship between staff and young people. Young people confirm that they feel valued by staff. Young people are clear that they are able to approach any member of staff at any time to discuss issues.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and helped to develop independent living skills to help them look after themselves. These include assisting in the planning of menus, shopping and preparation of food. The home liaises closely with the local authority, parents/carers and other agencies to ensure suitable placements are being arranged for young people when they leave

the home. The staff team works with young people on personalised programmes to support the development of their skills. These link into pathway plans when young people reach this stage of their development. An independence survival pack is being developed that provides practical exercises, as well as appropriate information for young people.

Documentation shows that when young people show particular skills and interests, the care staff team will find and support them in work placements to develop their skills and self confidence. The development of young people's self awareness, self confidence and life skills in preparation for leaving care is key to the service provided by the home.

The home is set in its own spacious grounds, in a quiet residential area some distance from the centre of town. It is not on a bus route and the home employs a driver/handyman, to ensure young people are not disadvantaged by the isolation of the setting. All areas of the grounds are well kept and provide good recreational areas for young people. The home itself is well decorated, suitably furnished and well maintained. Staff stated and young people confirmed, that young people are consulted about the furnishings and wall colourings in their bedrooms and communal areas. All the young people's bedrooms have lockable doors. Some young people have personalised their bedrooms with photographs, pictures and posters. Communal areas in the home are homely and comfortable.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is very well managed and efficiently run, providing a safe and stable environment for the young people living there. The Registered Manager is well supported and supervised by senior managers and provides clear management for the care staff team. The care staff team demonstrates an awareness of their roles and responsibilities that ensures young people's assessed needs are being met.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a detailed policy and guidance. Cultural identity is reflected within the choices being made on how bedrooms are personalised. The quality and detail of care plans ensures personalised services are provided that are capable of meeting young people's personal needs. Ongoing consultation ensures that the young people are fully involved with all aspects of their lives as well as the management and organisation of the home. Matters that promote fairness and understanding of other beliefs and cultures are routinely integrated into staff planning of activities for young people.

The home provides comprehensive details about the care it provides. A user-friendly guide for young people, advises them of what it is like to live in the home. Key workers also follow an induction programme with them to ensure they are fully aware of their rights and also know the expectations of them.

Senior managers and all other staff are very committed to providing high quality care for young people and monitor and constantly review staff practice, to improve the service they are providing. Viewing of staff duty rotas and observation of working practices, shows the home is adequately staffed for the young people currently living there. The staff team are well organised and benefit from strong, energetic leadership and management. The supervision and appraisal of staff takes place consistently within the recommended timescale, contributing significantly to their own personal development plans. Staff feel well supported and are clear about their own roles and responsibilities.

Regular staff meetings are held each week to ensure consistency in practice across the staff team. Staff morale is high, resulting in an enthusiastic workforce, which works positively with young people to improve their quality of life.

Monthly monitoring visits by the Registered Manager are carried out and form part of the quality assurance system of the home. The home has developed its quality monitoring systems and seeks feedback from placing authorities, parents or carers and young people as part of this. The Registered Manager undertakes stringent monthly checks of documentation and generally ensures staff take action to address any deficit in recording she finds. However, although having identified deficits in relation to the recording of the effectiveness of sanctions identified in this report, there was no evidence as to the actions to be taken to address the issue. A recommendation has been made in relation to this.

The local authority has failed to ensure that its appointed representative undertakes monthly Regulation 33 monitoring visits to the home. An action has been made in relation to this deficit.

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

Standard	Action	Due date
22	ensure all staff fully complete the sanction log (Regulation 17)	30 September 2009
32	ensure that the local authority fulfills its responsibility to undertake monthly inspections of the service provided by the home (Regulation 33)	30 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the whole staff team are consistent in the manner in which they document the effectiveness of sanctions given to young people (NMS 22)
- ensure that when deficits in recording are identified during Schedule 6 inspections future reports indicate how these have been addressed (NMS 33)