

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Wendy Anderson
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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 one of a number of children's services operated by the provider. The home is a six-bedroom detached house in its own grounds, in a rural location. It is close to a local town and all its facilities. The service was registered in November 2004 as a children's home for four young people with emotional or behavioural problems.

Summary

This was a key inspection and all the key standards were inspected. The home continues to provide a safe environment for the young people. The young people have very positive relationships with staff. The young people know what is expected of them, that staff will keep agreed boundaries and listen to their views, comments and concerns. The staff provide strong individual support to young people, including helping them to gain skills for independence. Young people are encouraged to behave well by being given personal incentives and rewards. The staff team help young people work well together and they have clear and comprehensive guidance for the work they undertake. Young people are encouraged and supported to continue with their education and at the time of inspection all of the young people were in full time education. The home keeps good records showing how young people have progressed and shares information with the young person and their social worker.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has ensured that all young people have medical consents and current personal education plans. Also those young people who are of an age to require them have pathway plans. Young people have been involved in devising of both these plans. All of the looked after children documentation has been obtained for all young people placed at the home.

The recording of young people's individual key work session has improved and now reflects the discussion which took place, any actions required and a review of these actions at the subsequent session.

The home now ensures that all Schedule 5 notifications are made within the required timescales.

There has been a vast improvement in staff supervision taking place with the required timescales. The only exception to this is a new member of staff who has not received fortnightly supervision as required.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home provides young people with a healthy environment where care is taken to arrange routine health appointments and keep records of illnesses, accidents, injuries and medication administered. The home maintains records of all medication disposed of but these are incomplete. These records do not record the date the medication disposed of, where it was disposed of and which member of staff was responsible. Staff encourage and support young people to attend medical appointments, including seeing specialists, whilst respecting young people's rights to

refuse help and treatment. Medication within the home is stored appropriately and there are clear guidance and policies about the administration of medicines, health promotion and education. All of the young people at the home have consent for the administration of medication and first aid signed by people with parental responsibility for them. Risk assessments are in place where young people self-administer their own medication. This includes work with the young person and safe handling of medication. Staff take appropriate opportunities with individual young people to talk about health issues, such as the effects of drug or alcohol misuse, relationships, sex and healthy lifestyles.

Food at the home is varied and nutritious. Young people have input to the menus and are involved in shopping for and preparing meals. Young people said the food was good and there was always plenty of choice and lots to eat. There are gaps in the records of fridge and freezer temperatures. Also there is evidence of the fridges and freezer not functioning within the temperature range required by the environmental health department. This could potentially lead to foods being stored inappropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are protected and safe at the home. Staff ensure that information about young people is securely stored. Young people say that staff respect their personal privacy by knocking on their doors and asking 'if it's ok' before entering. The bathrooms and toilets within the home provide appropriate privacy for young people. The home has an appropriate room search policy. Wherever possible room searches are carried out in the presence of the young person. Where a young person is not present they are informed. Room searches are carried out by two staff and these searches are appropriately recorded.

Young people know how to make a complaint and are satisfied with the way the staff and managers look into their complaints. Young people said that staff would always take any concerns they had seriously, support them in making a complaint and would take the required action. Records of complaints demonstrated that they are dealt with effectively. Information on the home complaint process is in the young person guide.

Clear steps are taken to safeguard young people. The staff are trained in and are knowledgeable about child protection procedures including arrangements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The manager knows when to report or seek advice from professionals outside the home. There have not been any child protection incidents since the last inspection.

Staff at the home are alert to the possibility of bullying between the young people; know what signs to look for and how to respond if it is reported. Young people know that they can report bullying to staff or at their house meeting and that staff will take action to deal with it quickly. Young people said that bullying was not an issue at the home. The home's policies and procedures provide clear guidance for staff on bullying. This includes information on cyber bullying via the internet or mobile phones.

There are clear procedures in place for young people who are absent without authority which are linked to young peoples individual risk assessments and behaviour plans. Records kept of these incidents are clear and include information on debrief session held with young people upon their return. Since the last inspection no young people have gone missing.

Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour. The focus of the home is the reinforcement of positive behaviours. Each young person has goals to achieve daily for which they receive a financial reward. Young people also earn points towards more significant rewards by their positive behaviour, such as a 'pamper day' or a visit to a football stadium. The home is carrying out a review the reward system and is fully involving the young people in this process. Young people accept that they are sanctioned when they do not behave in an acceptable way. Young people said that sanctions used are fair. Regular meetings with the young people are used to talk about their behaviour towards one another, including when necessary, any bullying issues. The home has an appropriate policy, procedure and records on sanctions. The home has an appropriate policy and procedure for the restraint of young people. There have been no restraints since the last inspection. Where restraints do take place these are appropriately recorded including the views of the young people. Staff receive regular update training on restraint and behaviour management.

The home has a clear policy on the reporting of significant events to the appropriate organisations and these are made within 24 hours of the event.

Young people know what they should do in the event of a fire at the home. Records confirm that the alarm systems are tested regularly and other procedures are in place to ensure maintenance of equipment and installations. Risk assessments are used to identify and reduce risks from hazards around the building, grounds and activities by young people. These are reviewed and updated regularly.

The home has a robust selection and recruitment procedure which protects young people. A human resources specialist is responsible for undertaking recruitment checks for all new staff to the organisation. In general, checks undertaken exceed what is required. Wherever possible young people are involved in the interview process for new staff, but it is the young people's choice as to whether they are involved in this process.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are well supported at the home, both by members of staff and from other specialists. All young people have a key worker and co-key worker who arrange the help and support that each person needs. These key workers are selected by the young person. Key workers meet with young people on a weekly basis and minutes are kept of these meetings. These minutes reflect the discussion and include actions to be undertaken and a review that this happens. Young people were very positive about their key workers. The young people have allocated social workers and others involved in supporting them, interventions and youth offending workers.

All of the young people are in fulltime education and are strongly encouraged and supported in this by staff from the home. There are positive links with the education placements of young people which have helped to maintain young people's attendance. The education advisor can also be involved to mediate and negotiate with education placements on young people's behalf. Regular attendance in education is encouraged through the young people's incentives scheme. All of the young people have a personal education plan. Staff attend parents evenings and other parental events run by the schools the young people attend.

Young people are supported and encouraged to take part in a wide range of activities both within the home and in the community. Young people said that they are able to put forward ideas for activities and staff will do what they can to provide these. They also said that the incentive scheme the home runs enables them to access even more activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are aware and involved in all of the plans that have been written, setting out how the home will work with them to meet their assessed needs. The home has its own clear and comprehensive plans. Young people's files contain all the required looked after children's documentation. The events and activities of each young person are summarised each week and the home creates a comprehensive summary, including details of achievements, incidents, health, education and professionals' visits, to present at formal reviews. Young people are consulted regularly to give their views and are encouraged to take part in their formal review meetings. Plans for young people are updated following reviews, for instance, to give a young person opportunities to learn and practise skills for independence.

All of young people are having their reviews at the required intervals. Young people said that staff help them prepare for their reviews and support them in taking part in the review meeting. It is the home policy that for any emergency admission there is a planning meeting held after 72 hours.

Admissions to the home are handled in a caring and sensitive manner. The manager is fully involved in any admission. A risk assessment is carried out prior to any admission to assess the young person's compatibility with the existing group. This effective gatekeeping greatly reduces the disruptive effects. The staff discuss with the resident group that an admission is coming so as to prepare them. Staff apply the same caring approach to young people leaving the home. Ongoing support is provided by the staff to young people when they leave, with the agreement of any subsequent placement. A number of young people who are now independent still receive support from the staff team.

All young people are supported in maintaining contact with their family and friends. Young people's families are supported by the staff team in attending reviews and other meetings. Friends are welcome at the home. Young people have their own mobile phones but can also use the public phone and the office phone at the home to contact their families.

Young people are involved and consulted about the way the home is run and supported to make decisions about their own lives. Young people's meetings are held frequently. Young people said that they felt the residents meetings were effective. They said they discuss a wide range of things including food, activities, sanctions, bullying and decoration but did not have to wait for a young people's meeting. They said a lot of discussion takes place over meals and throughout the day.

The relationships between the staff and the young people are a strength of the home. Young people spoke very positively about the staff team. They said the staff really care about them, listen to and value their views and are fun to spend time with. They said staff always make time for them and listen to and value what they say. Staff are very knowledgeable about the young people they work with and are very committed to their work.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported and encouraged in developing skills to prepare them for independence including pathway plans.

The home is a pleasant and homely environment for young people to live in. Young people have been able to move rooms within the house and decorate their rooms in colour schemes and with personal items. A rolling programme is in place for re-decoration and replacement of furniture. There is a process for recording and reporting maintenance issues which are dealt with by the home's head office. One of the bathrooms has been refurbished to a high standard and the other bathroom is due for refurbishment. There are also plans for the kitchen to be refurbished. Young people have been involved in this process. Young people are very happy with the décor and furnishings at the home.

Records kept of young people's clothing, personal requisites and pocket monies are comprehensive providing evidence of running totals of deposits, withdrawals and balances.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has an appropriate Statement of Purpose. This information is readily available and gives an accurate reflection of how the home is run. Young people are given a handbook about the home when they arrive. Young people have been involved in the development of this handbook.

Staff supervision has improved. They now receive supervision at the required intervals covering the required topics and there are clear records of these sessions. The only exception of this is a new member of staff who has not received supervision every two weeks as required. Those staff who are supervisors have received appropriate training. All staff receive an annual appraisal, which incorporates a personal development plan. Staff meetings are held at the required intervals and minutes are taken.

Young people receive care from a competent staff team and there are clear on call arrangements. More than 80% of staff are qualified to at least National Vocational Qualification at level 3. The staff rota schedules times for supervision, staff meeting and staff handovers. There have been occasions where two male staff have slept in but the manager has completed a risk assessment for this event.

The home places an emphasis on staff training. Staff spoken to supported this view. Their training programme covers all the required topics with a number of courses being regularly updated. The home has a comprehensive 12 week induction programme for all new staff. The home's bank staff are included in all staff training. Specific training linked to the needs of young people is also available.

There are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home, including a quality assurance process where placing social workers are invited to complete a questionnaire about the service. The Regulation 33 visits happen as required with the majority of these being unannounced. There is evidence that the manager monitors the homes records and responds to points from

the monthly Regulation 33 visits. The manager carries out monthly Regulation 34 monitoring which includes monitoring the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose.

Young people's files are securely stored and contain all the required information. Young people have their needs, development and progress clearly recorded whilst they are staying at the home. They are able to read what is written about them as well as adding their own comments if they wish.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evident throughout all of the home's policies and procedures.

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
28	ensure that staff supervision happens at the interval as required by standard 28.2. (Regulation 27)	31 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure fridge and freezer temperature are consistently recorded and that temperatures comply with the recommended temperature ranges of the environmental health department (NMS 26)
- ensure the records of disposed medication contains the date, where the medication was disposed of and the name of the member of staff responsible for disposing of the medication. (NMS 13)