

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 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. The home keeps good records showing how young people have progressed and shares information with the young person and their social worker. Since the last inspection a new manager has been appointed.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has ensured that young people have informal opportunities to resolve complaints at an early stage. The system for recording complaints is robust. Young people receive feedback on any complaints they make and on all other avenues of consultation.

The speed at which maintenance and repairs are carried out has improved and where major work is required the manager carries out a risk assessment.

The staff recruitment information contains all the required information, including verification from previous employment involving children or vulnerable people as to why the employment was terminated.

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 or injuries. Staff encourage and support young people to attend medical appointments, including seeing specialists, whilst respecting young people's rights to refuse help and treatment. Although health care issues are recorded within the home's health care plans, there is a lack of information on looked after children's documentation provided by social workers on medical issues. Medication within the home is stored appropriately and there is clear guidance and policies about health promotion and education. One of the young people at the home did not have a signed consent for the administration of medication. Staff take appropriate opportunities with individual young people

to talk about issues, such as the effects of drug misuse and 'safe sex'. Risk assessments are used to guide giving young people any medicines to look after themselves.

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.

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 know about keeping information about young people safe and private. Young people say that staff respect their personal privacy by knocking on their doors and asking 'if it's ok' before entering. 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 will be 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 they were confident that staff would take what they say seriously and would take the required action. Records of complaints demonstrated that they are dealt with effectively.

Clear steps are taken to safeguard young people. The staff are trained in and knowledgeable about child protection procedures including arrangements of the local Safeguarding 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 and know 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. 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 phone.

There have been a few instances of young people leaving without permission. There are plans in place for each of the young people which are relevant to their own needs and risks if they leave the home without permission.

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. Young people accept that they are sanctioned when they do not behave in an acceptable way. Young people said that sanctions used are generally 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 and procedure for the restraint of young people. There has been a significant reduction of restraints since the last inspection. Where restraints have

taken place these are appropriately recorded but information on the behaviour which leads to the restraint and the de brief sessions held need more detail and clarity.

The home has an appropriate policy and procedure for working with young people who abscond. Records are kept of any absconding but more information is required on the de brief session held with young people upon their return.

The home has a clear policy on the reporting of significant events to the appropriate organisations. However, the home must ensure these notifications are made within 24 hours of the event.

The bathrooms and toilets within the home provide appropriate privacy for young people.

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. This was happening at the time of inspection.

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 satisfactory.

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 try to 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. There is a lack of consistency and clarity within these minutes. It is not always possible to identify actions to be taken and by whom. Some of the notes do not reflect the discussions that have taken place. 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. Several staff said they felt that young people's social workers did not visit frequently enough, with some only visiting when attending reviews. The manager said that there can also be a delay in new social workers being allocated once a social worker has left.

All of the young people are continuing with education and have been 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 adviser 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. None of the young people have a personal education plan.

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 satisfactory.

Young people are aware 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. There is a lack of information within the looked after children documentation and some of this documentation was missing from some young people's files despite requests from the home to the young person's social worker. 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.

The majority of young people are having their reviews at the required intervals. It is the home policy that for any emergency admission there is a planning meeting held after 72 hours. This did not happen with the last emergency admission.

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 gate keeping greatly reduces the disruptive effects. The staff discuss with the resident group that an admission is coming so as to prepare them.

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. 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.

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 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 satisfactory.

Young people are supported and encouraged in developing skills to prepare them for independence, however not all the young people have 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. The bathrooms at the home are planned for refurbishment. Also some of the windows are due for replacement. Staff had been using one of the downstairs rooms, the education room, as a sleeping room, which must not happen. The home is also having substantial work done replacing roof tiles. Young people are happy with the décor and furnishings at the home.

Records kept of young people's clothing, personal requisites and pocket monies are incomplete as they do not provide running totals of deposits, withdrawals and balances.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has an appropriate statement of purpose. This information is readily available to people needing it and gives an accurate reflection of how the home is run. Young people are given a handbook about the home when they arrive.

Staff receive supervision but this is not at the required intervals. The minutes of these sessions vary, with some lacking information on the discussion and subsequent actions. This includes newly appointed staff. 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. Some of these again lack detail and actions to be taken.

Young people receive care from a competent staff team and there are clear on call arrangements. Since the last inspection a new manager has been appointed. More than 80% of staff are qualified to at least level 3. The staff rota schedules times for supervision, staff meeting and staff handovers. However, it is not possible for the existing staff team to cover all the hours required without the regular use of staff from other homes owned by the provider, bank or relief staff. The staff rota also evidences that new members of staff who have not completed their probationary period have slept in together and they have also carried out sleeping shifts with bank staff. There have also been occasions where two male staff have slept in.

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. However, there has been no training on the administration of medication. 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 occasionally 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 but the majority of these are announced. There is evidence that the manager monitors the records made at the home and responds to points from the Operations Manager's formal monthly visits. The manager does not monitor the performance of the home against its statement of purpose

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
13	ensure all young people have a signed consent for the administration of medication. Regulation 20 and 21.	30 September 2009
20	ensure notifications of significant events are made within 24 hours. Regulation 30.	30 September 2009
7	ensure the record of key work sessions is comprehensive, including details of the discussion and actions to be undertaken. Regulation 11.	30 September 2009
14	ensure that all young people have personal education plans. Regulation 18	30 September 2009
2	ensure that all young people have all the required looked after children's documentation. Regulation 12.	30 September 2009
6	ensure all young people have pathway plans. Children's Act 1989, sections 22, 61, 64.	30 September 2009
11	ensure that the records of all monies for clothing, personal requisites and pocket money are comprehensive. Regulation 14.	30 September 2009
28	ensure that staff supervision happens at the interval as required by standard 28.2. Regulation 27	30 September 2009
29	ensure that staff on probation do not sleep in together or with bank staff. Also ensure that the gender of those staff sleeping in reflects the gender of the young people. Regulations 25 and 26.	30 September 2009
33	ensure that the manager's monitoring of the home includes monitoring the home's statement of purpose against the work undertaken at the home. Regulation 34	30 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- review the number on the staff team so that the rota can operate without relying on the use of staff from other homes owned by the provider, bank staff or agency staff. NMS 30