

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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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 offers care and accommodation for up to four young people, between the ages of 10 and 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

It is a detached cottage with three bedrooms, and an annex that provides a semi-independent unit for one young person. Both buildings are situated in spacious gardens, two miles from the local shopping centre and all local leisure facilities. Other shops are a short walking distance from the home.

At the time of the inspection four young people were at home and three of them took part in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This inspection was unannounced. This report comments on every outcome heading covering all the key children's homes national minimum standards. Progress against actions and recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

The operation of this home is managed well under the leadership of a new Registered Manager. Staff practice provides a high standard of care and the support provided enables young people to achieve and develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Relationships between staff and the young people are excellent. Residents provide excellent cooperation and this allows appropriate boundaries to be maintained and safeguarding support to be coordinated on many levels. Young people remain safe and happy in their placements. There have been few behavioural management issues affecting the home's operation. The young people have chosen to lead stable lifestyles.

There is good emphasis on gaining important life skills. Staff liaise closely with social workers to plan young people's futures. Placement plans are detailed and these are being implemented very well. The promotion of young people's health and well-being is excellent. Education is actively promoted. Young people remain focussed and they make the best of each opportunity presented to them.

The home's operation is monitored. Satisfactory quality assurance systems are established. Some systems are being reviewed. The management team reflect on practice to enable ongoing developments to be made. Staff receive good support and access to training and this improves their skills. There is a development plan that helps to outline how standards will be maintained.

This report highlights some actions and recommendations to support practice developments. The home's Registered Manager is still to complete relevant qualifications. The Registered Manager does not receive professional supervision on a regular basis. This can restrict her personal development. The level and detail of information in Regulation 33 reports is not sufficient to form a clear opinion on the standard of care being provided in the home. Reports do not identify areas for improvement. The 2011 - 2012 staff training programme is still to be finalised. Staff qualifications and experience are not outlined within the home's Statement of Purpose. Young people's views and opinions are not being recorded within incident records. The process for verifying references is not clear.

Improvements since the last inspection

Actions and recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or are in the process of being addressed. Further work is required to capture the comments of young people involved in incidents. The staffing details outlined in the home's Statement of Purpose remain incomplete.

There is improved clarity of information within management records. Induction process and supervision frequency is clear. Up to date training records are being maintained and there are clearer links between staff personal development and appraisal. A new Registered Manager has been appointed. There is clear leadership and management at the home. Deployment of staff is good. Staff members placed in charge of the home have substantial relevant experience. Staff are now clearer about their roles and there is information held in-house on the methods and techniques to be used if physical intervention is required. A good percentage of the staff hold their National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Health plans are detailed allowing health support to be coordinated very well. In-house quality assurance systems monitor practice closely and this means that it remains safe. Good training is provided. Local chemists support all aspects of medicine management. Parental permissions for emergency treatment, and for administering medicines and first aid had been gained.

Policy and procedural guidance to support health and well-being is clear. There is policy relating to prescription medication and the use of household remedies. The contents of the medicines cabinet comply with the policy.

The management team ensure full health histories are gained as part of the referral procedure or immediately after introduction. The home managed two emergency admissions between inspections. Any issues identified within referral documents are promptly discussed. This means that young people's health is promoted from the start of their placement. Health remains a key priority throughout the time young people live at the home.

The young people confirm satisfaction with how health and well-being are handled. They confirm that they are familiar with their health arrangements and are fully aware of the contents of their health plans. Young people are allowed to administer their own medication if sufficiently responsible to do so. Risk assessments are produced to support practice. The key worker role is well developed to deliver health promotion work covering matters such as smoking cessation, drug misuse, sex and relationship advice and healthy living. Staff work closely with the young people supporting their health needs. Trusting relationships ensure young people are comfortable and confident to talk with staff about any health matters or concerns they might have.

Routine medical, optical and dental appointments are organised by key workers. Statutory medical examinations are organised. Young people have opted to lead safe and healthier lives. Specialist advice and help is organised to support mental health when required and there is access to a clinical psychologist. Staff at the home are good at encouraging the young people to engage with supportive services.

Catering arrangements are managed well. Menus are planned with the young people and meals are nutritionally balanced. Minimum staff input is needed to encourage healthy eating. Being healthy through good diet and exercise is recognised by all the young people. They work closely alongside staff in preparing meals. Many have developed skills through independence training. One young resident volunteered her culinary talents to prepare lunch on the day of the inspection. Culturally themed meals are encouraged by staff and birthdays and special occasions are celebrated.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The young people present at this inspection are happy and settled. Individual personalities have been enabled to prosper due to effective staff support. No concern relating to bullying is evident. The young people have an appreciation of and respect for their peers and staff. They learn to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they contribute to community life. Relationships between young people remain manageable on virtually all occasions meaning that the majority of experiences being gained are positive. The present peer group provide excellent cooperation. The following comment was made by a young person, 'Staff make me feel safe and unlike in any other home before I trust all staff. We have a good routine and we have a good relationship with staff. They're all like a family to me'.

Accurate records are maintained showing the home is managed well, providing suitable physical safety and security for each individual. Staff have received suitable training in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Policy and procedural guidance has been established at this home that is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people within a children's guide.

They are aware of the contents of their information and they acknowledge that people suffer no recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made.

The staff team are competent. Staff with key worker responsibilities uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to achieve and develop. Respectful communication is the norm at the home. A good atmosphere was maintained throughout the visit. Young people respond very well to praise. There is effective use of positive reinforcement as opposed to the use of sanctions. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives. No concerns have been highlighted relating to physical intervention. As part of the home's agreed safeguarding procedures the young people reflect on incidents they are involved in. This information is not always recorded.

The reporting systems and actions taken in response to significant incidents are appropriate. Transparent reporting allows staff practice to be monitored and contributes to young people remaining safe. There is a well established missing from home protocol. There has been a good degree of success in reducing the number of times that young people go missing without permission.

Health and safety at the home is managed well. Certification is held centrally and this shows regular servicing of electrical installations. There is no gas to the premises. Portable appliance testing, fire extinguisher servicing and checks on emergency lighting are routinely undertaken. A fire risk assessment of the premises is available. The recording of fire drills is clear. Hazards to young peoples safety are minimised by staff.

Information held on personnel files confirms no staff start work prior to being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. A suitable checking system is evident throughout the recruitment process. However, it was not clear how references are verified. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Individual needs are outlined within a range of plans including placement plans, risk assessments and health plans. Comprehensive records are maintained on the work being undertaken. The knowledge that staff have enables a timely individual response when young people are most in need. Support provided is coordinated extremely well ensuring children and young people continuously make progress and achieve goals.

Young people develop an understanding and appreciation of their personal circumstances and work very well with staff to plan their futures. Direct work is excellent. Residents develop self knowledge, self esteem and self confidence and are able to distinguish right from wrong and how to respect the law. Residents demonstrate a great deal of knowledge on equality and diversity matters including

those affecting their rights, fairness, relationships and respect. Staff's hard work is clearly reflected in the level amount of understanding that young people display.

There is a plan to turn the home into a therapeutic community. Staff were being trained in a new model of care at the time of this inspection. Training is delivered in conjunction with a clinical psychologist. Any changes required to the home's documentation will be made before this model is fully implemented.

Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Educational opportunities are tailored to meet individual needs and there are excellent opportunities presented to access mainstream school placements and college courses. Suitable strategies are deployed to further improve attendance. Successes are celebrated. Residents have accessed university placements with staff support. Young people clearly understand the values of gaining a good education. The responsible organisation recently registered its own school with the Department of Education. This will add to the range of services accessible to young people resident.

Staff practice engages the young people in a range of activities to develop skills and individual potential. Staff are skilled at identifying individual interests and have been successful in supporting young people's aspirations. Recreation is clearly linked to developing healthy lifestyles. Suitable resources are available at the home. There is a suitable budget provided to enable young people to pursue their hobbies and interests in the community. The young people work closely with staff to plan trips out and holidays.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Practice at this home successfully embraces the Every Child Matters agenda designed to improve children's services. Records provide a permanent overview of the work that takes place. Placement plans address young people's religion, cultural identity and heritage. Information held provides a clear account of an individual's progress and successes as well as the occasional disappointment. The young people provided many positive comments on their experiences at the home. They are very confident in airing their views.

Referral procedures are managed well. The home accepts emergency placements and these are managed to minimise disruption for young people already resident. Risk assessments also support planning. The ability of staff to maintain strong supportive relationships with young people ensures placement stability.

Reviews are held at the correct frequency allowing placement plans to be monitored. Reports are prepared for each review. Young people complete their own consultation records. Placement planning is effective. Contact arrangements are established for each young person. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of family histories. There is effective liaison with social workers, parents and carers to manage leave

and contact arrangements. The reasons why some contact has to be supervised is known and clearly recorded. A suitable and sensible checking process is carried out to allow young people contact with friends in the surrounding community.

Good communication between staff, young people and their parents, social workers and other professionals is evident. Young people are fully consulted with and fully involved in life at the home. They make a clear contribution to the development of services. Staff are committed to developing the standard of care by continuing to seek views. Young people's expressed opinions and feedback are welcomed at this home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The management team is familiar with the formal response required for pathway and aftercare planning. Plans are developed through statutory review procedures. Assessments include input from young people, staff and social workers. This approach ensures decisions are agreed and areas of responsibility are known from the start. The age and stage of young people's placements mean formal pathway planning is not yet needed. Placement experiences provided at the home allow young people to gain life skills that will support them into adulthood. The quality of experience provided in-house means young people gain competencies that prepare them for the world of work.

The home is safe and decorated and furnished to a good standard. The space and resources to meet the needs of the young people is good. The design and layout manages to retain a homely and comfortable feel. The use of the space and the different rooms is well thought out. A separate annex to the home is included in the registration. This space is self contained and provides residents with independent and semi-independent learning experiences. The young people value their surroundings and this means there is minimum damage to the fabric of the building which is well maintained. Each young person has their own bedroom which is suitably personalised. Bathrooms and toilets comply with national minimum standards for children's homes. Established routines ensure the accommodation remains clean and tidy.

Relationships and appropriate links are being maintained with the surrounding community. Young people frequently utilise community resources. Staff provide advice to young people on how to stay safe when they are out in the community. Relationships with the local community police are well established.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation responsible for the home's operation appointed a new manager between inspections. The new Registered Manager is experienced and holds some of

the relevant qualifications. Further training is being undertaken. The home's management kept Ofsted well informed on the changes and ensured the home remained stable. The highly motivated staff and management team deliver a high standard of care. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations. The staff team understand the needs of the young people and possess the skills to meet them.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is policy and guidance to support staff practice. Training has been provided and this ensures staff address many equality matters including fairness which is reflected within the staff team's practice to ensure each resident continues to gain positive experiences. Staff are also good at listening to young people and allow each individual opportunities to voice their views, opinions and concerns. Transparent communication with young people and social workers demonstrates a real commitment to further improving equality and diversity in practice. Equality and diversity is firmly established within the culture and ethos of the home. The young people are clear about their rights and value the efforts made by staff to support them.

Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Monthly reports are being produced by managers external to the home but reports include few comments on discussions that take place with young people and staff. This does not provide sufficient external challenge to promote improvement. The Registered Manager undertakes checks as part of her quality assurance measures. She is committed to improving services through self evaluation and reflective practice as evidenced in the accurate written self assessment.

Records provide a clear picture of how staff are managed. Induction and foundation training is provided and good training attendance records are maintained. Staff confirm that supervision is taking place. The frequency of professional supervision being provided for the Registered Manager is unsatisfactory. There is access to National Vocational Qualification training at level 3 and 4. These are recognised qualifications to work in and manage a children's residential setting. A good percentage of staff hold relevant qualifications. The company training programme for 2011-12 is still to be finalised. Records on staff personal development and appraisal are maintained. The Registered Manager recognises the need to set more specific objectives to encourage further staff development.

Good leadership is provided. The staff team demonstrate many competencies. Deployment of staff is good. Continuity with staff practice was not affected by a few staff changes between inspections. Rotas demonstrate that staffing levels are being maintained. Staff are clear about their roles, prioritising their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people are met whilst ensuring that the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken.

Staff are provided with good written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations with the exception of an up to date staffing list. Staff experience and qualifications are not outlined in this important document. Aims and objectives, as

well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Management are aware that they will need to revise documentation when the home's purpose and function changes to therapeutic community status.

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
32	undertake monthly visits as set out in Regulation 33, specifically, improve the level of detail in these reports in order to promote improvement in the provision of care (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	21/06/2011
1	ensure the staffing list within the Statement of Purpose includes detail of staff qualifications and experience. (Regulation 4, Schedule 1 (5))	21/04/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure clear records are produced to show that young people have had the opportunity to discuss incidents that they are involved in and express their views (NMS 22.14)
- ensure personnel information makes clear how and when references are verified (NMS 27)
- ensure the 2011 - 2012 training programme is finalised (NMS 31.5)
- ensure the Registered Manager completes all relevant training (NMS 34.3)
- ensure suitable arrangements exist for the professional supervision of the Registered Manager. (NMS 28.5)