

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqui Gosling
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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 registered for up to seven young people aged between 12 and 17 years and is owned and operated by a private organisation. The premises are situated in a residential area, within walking distance of shops and public transport. The home accommodates young people with emotional difficulties for medium to long stay periods.

The ground floor has a lounge; an education room; a kitchen; the main office; laundry; meeting room and a self-contained young person's flat. On the first floor there are six single bedrooms with washing facilities, two separate toilets and one communal bathroom. The manager's office is also on this floor. The garden has a hard area for sports activities. Currently, seven young people are living here.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection focuses on all outcome areas. The inspection also considers whether the two recommendations made during the previous inspection have been addressed. One young person spoke about the support received from staff and his experience of living here.

The physical, emotional, health and welfare needs of the young people are well met overall. Staff are actively working to promote their wellbeing but consent for first aid and the administration of household medication has not been obtained. Risk assessments are not always sufficiently robust and fire drills do not comply with children's home's regulations. Currently, the records kept of complaints is insufficient for external inspection and the home does not have a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

The home has excellent arrangements in place to support young people's education but currently the young people are refusing to engage in either formal or informal education.

Young people make good relationships with staff, who work well with schools and other agencies. The commitment of all staff to meeting the needs of young people is evident.

The management of the home is not robust, staff are not receiving supervision as required. Recruitment procedures do not address all the required checks.

Overall, the home is providing a satisfactory standard of care for young people.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last inspection are fully addressed.

Young people have access to people independent of the home whom they may contact directly about personal problems or concerns at the home; this includes counselling mentors who visit the home regularly.

All measures of control are relevant to the incident and appropriate to the age and understanding of individual young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary and health needs. Some young people say 'they enjoy cooking'. Staff complete training in food hygiene as required. Staff support and encourage young people to take an active role in budgeting, purchasing and cooking the food they buy as part of the promoting independent living skills programme. Staff have recently purchased a small greenhouse and are encouraging the young people to grow plants of their own choice.

The health and care needs of young people are identified and updated regularly. A clear plan for each young person details how their specific and general health issues are to be addressed. Some young people self-administer their own medication but this has not been risk assessed to ensure they know how to manage their medication properly. All young people are registered with the required health professionals.

There are multi-skilled therapeutic staff offering support to the young people. For example, psychology and counsellor support and an in-house drugs and alcohol worker. Staff, in partnership with the person with parental responsibility, actively seek out further services when required to meet the needs of the young people. For example, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Therefore, the young people receive care that actively promotes their wellbeing and health.

The files for all young people contain looked after child signed medical consent forms from the person with parental responsibility. Staff have discussed with a general practitioner if the administration of household medication will have any contra indications to young people's prescribed medication. This is good practice. However, consent for the administration of household medication and first aid has not been obtained. This has the potential to delay young people receiving prompt attention should they require it. The wellbeing of young people is further promoted by staff undertaking training in first aid. However, not all staff complete this training within required timescales.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Information held on behalf of all young people is appropriately stored. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to promote privacy and confidentiality. The home uses surveillance cameras on the communal landing upstairs and areas outside the building for the purpose of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. Young people and their social workers are informed of this measure and understand it is used to safeguard them and the other young people within the home. The use of these cameras does not impinge unnecessarily on the young people's right and need for privacy.

The home has a room search policy and procedures. However, it is not mentioned in the young people's guide and when staff recently removed aerosols when cleaning a young person's room because of concerns about their misuse, the required paperwork was not completed.

Young people are aware of the complaints policy and use it. However, the system in place to record any concerns made known by them and show that the matter has been appropriately dealt with is inadequate. Information is recorded on their individual files, however, the complaints log does not show the outcome or whether the young people are informed of the outcome. Therefore, when young people leave the home there is insufficient information for internal or external inspection.

The welfare of young people is protected because staff receive training in child protection. However, there are neither Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures in the home or the local interagency protocols on prevention and investigation of child prostitution as required, to ensure staff know who to contact in the local authority should the need arise.

Young people know that bullying is not tolerated and they are confident that staff will intervene to ensure they are protected from bullying by others should the need arise. Young people say 'they feel safe living here'. Their safety is further promoted when their whereabouts are unknown as staff follow the agreed reporting procedures for these circumstances and their records clearly show perceived risks, for example medication needs. This results in practices that are consistent with wider police protocols for reporting young people who abscond.

Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour management policies and strategies have as their prime objective the creation of a safe, supportive environment. Staff have completed the required training to ensure that if physical intervention is necessary it is consistent with guidance.

There is positive interaction between staff and the young people and friendly banter. Staff appear very comfortable with their role and observation and records show they clearly understand the need for boundaries while maintaining an appropriate relationship between themselves and the young people.

Young people live in a home that overall provides for their physical safety and security. There are appropriate risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds. This includes serious incident planning; the behaviour of the young people and their activities. However, some risk assessments are not comprehensive. For example, the assessment in respect of aerosols does not state why young people cannot have aerosols and if the risk applies to an individual or all the young people.

There are appropriate records to show that all the fire systems are regularly tested and serviced. Relevant certificates show that regular servicing and maintenance is completed on all gas and electrical equipment. However, the fire drill procedures for evacuating young people do not comply with requirements as they only take place twice a year.

The recruitment, safeguarding and vetting procedures in place are not sufficiently robust. For example some staff have gaps in their employment history, other staff have offences disclosed on their Criminal Record Bureau checks, which do not appear to have been discussed at interview. The storage and disposal of the Criminal Record Bureau checks does not comply with the code of practice.

All visitors to the home are asked to sign in the visitor's book. However, on the day of inspection the member of staff did not ask to see any identification. This does not ensure the young people are kept safe from potential harm.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The progress and development of young people is well documented in their files and show how young people are supported throughout their stay.

Excellent resources are in place to provide young people with individual support. Young people have access to a psychologist, counsellor, drugs counsellor, education support worker and key worker to meet their specific needs. This support is readily available as and when the need arises. Many of the young people have complex needs that can usually be managed in-house. However staff will approach external specialist agencies such as Child, Adolescent and Mental Health Services if required.

Creative approaches are in place to engage the young people in formal and informal vocational education linked to their individual interests. An education room is available with a variety of resources. Young people can also participate in in-house education. Staff have the support of an education coordinator who proactively liaises with the local authority education department and other agencies to ensure young people receive an education in line with their age, educational needs, interests and potential. However, all the young people of statutory school age currently living at the home are refusing to attend any formal education facility and their participation in the in-house education offered is minimal.

All young people are supported and encouraged to participate in hobbies and activities of their choice within and outside of the home. Staff ensure that there is a correct balance between supervised and unsupervised time. This is risk assessed and takes into consideration the age, gender, abilities and interests of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people say they are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives. They are actively encouraged to communicate their views in regular discussions with their key carers, during group meetings and on an informal basis every day. In discussion, staff clearly demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of young people.

Staff respect and value equality and diversity. It is clear throughout the young people's placement plans that their individual needs are identified. Staff have a proactive approach to working with external agencies, social workers and other professionals to address these needs.

In accordance with their care plans all young people are encouraged to maintain contact with members of their families. Staff clearly understand how important communication and contact with their family is for the young people and support their contact arrangements.

The deputy managers are clearly able to show that all young people are appropriately placed. However, there are no written records available to show that impact assessments are completed before young people are placed in the home, as required.

Significant time is taken to build relationships between the staff and young people. Staff have clear expectations of appropriate behaviour and young people are observed to freely initiate interaction and seek help from the various staff members on duty. They clearly benefit from receiving support from staff that is focused on their needs and achievements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported and encouraged to develop essential independent living skills and benefit from living in a homely environment.

Some young people are at the initial stage of pathway planning and receive support with various tasks such as budgeting, cooking, managing laundry and completing other household tasks. Good links are made with Connexions, the Looked After Children in Education Service and colleges to secure education courses and career opportunities for the young people. All young people are encouraged to develop independent living skills.

There are suitable arrangements in place for the young people to be able to choose and purchase their own clothing and for them to receive pocket money. Young people expressed their satisfaction with the current arrangements for purchasing clothes.

The home is located in a residential area and the young people have good access to transport, education facilities, health care provision and leisure activities. Rooms are decorated, furnished and maintained to an appropriate standard. Young people say they are able to have some say in personalising their bedrooms.

Examples of the young people's achievements and activities are displayed on the corridor walls to encourage young people to have a sense of belonging. The home provides ample space for the number, age and gender of the young people living here.

Both the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in an appropriate state of structural and decorative repair with an ongoing maintenance programme in place.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a Statement of Purpose and young people's guide, which outlines the principles, practice and the services that they can expect from the home.

There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home. The Registered Manager is appropriately qualified but has not been undertaking the day-to-day management of the home for approximately six months. He has not formally informed Ofsted of the procedures put in place to cover his absence. The deputy managers are actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and have clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care.

Staff duty rotas and the manner in which staff are deployed confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times. Senior members of staff who are sufficiently experienced and competent lead the shifts.

Staff supervision records show that the majority of staff, including the deputy managers, have not been receiving supervision in accordance with national minimum standards for approximately six months. This does not provide young people with a staff group who are themselves supported and sufficiently guided in promoting their welfare needs. The deputy managers have started to address this lack of individual support to staff in the last month.

Effective information systems are in place to ensure the team's training and development needs are met overall but as mentioned previously not all staff are receiving their mandatory training within required timescales. There are appropriate systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. Regulation 33 visits are undertaken monthly to monitor the overall care and welfare of the young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The individual files of the young people are comprehensive, their health, welfare and educational needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. They contain a range of information about young people's history and progress, which matches the requirements set out in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

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

Standard	Action	Due date
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Regulation 26 Schedule 2, specifically ensure that gaps in employment history are discussed and past offences do not exclude staff from working with young people and storage of criminal record bureau checks comply with Criminal Record Bureau code of practice Regulation 26 Schedule 2	5 May 2010
34	ensure where the registered manager has been absent from the children's home for a continuous period of 28 days or more the registered person shall without delay give notice in writing to Ofsted specifying the matters mentioned in sub-paragraphs (a) to (e) of paragraph (2) (Regulation 37(4)).	5 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure staff are trained in the use of first aid (national minimum standard 13.5)
- obtain and retain on file prior written permission from a person with parental responsibility for each young person for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication (national minimum standard 13.4)

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- ensure searches are documented showing the time, date and reason for search, noting what if anything was found, who carried out the search and who was present at the time. Such records should be signed by all those present (national minimum standard 9.8)
 - ensure a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures is kept in the home (national minimum standard 17.2)
 - ensure the complaints procedure requires a written record to be made and kept of the person making the complaint, nature of the complaint, action taken and outcome of the complaint and is available for external inspection (national minimum standard 16.3)
 - ensure the home follows any local interagency protocols on prevention and investigation of child prostitution and there is a copy available in the home for staff to read (national minimum standard 17.10)
 - ensure at least four fire drills including evacuation of staff and children from the building take place in a 12 month period and are recorded (national minimum standard 26.8)
 - ensure risk assessments identify hazards, estimate level of risk from the hazards and identify action to be taken to reduce the risks to an acceptable level and to avoid unnecessary or unreasonable risks, specifically full information is required in relation to the young people's known and likely activities (national minimum standard 26.2)
 - ensure both the needs of the child concerned and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents are taken into account and recorded in decisions on admission to the home (national minimum standard 5.7)
 - ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month. (national minimum standard 28.2)