

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 is registered for up to seven young people aged between 12 and 17 years. It accommodates young people with emotional difficulties for medium to long-stay periods. It 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 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

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was a full unannounced inspection that concentrated on key national minimum standards. The inspection focused on areas relating to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection also concentrated on how the home consults with young people, plans for their care and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the service. Out of the 12 actions given on the previous inspection, 10 have been met while two will remain.

Two young people were at the home but did not participate in the inspection. The overall judgement for the home is satisfactory. Previous concerns raised about smoking have been addressed and met. All judgement outcomes are satisfactory with recognised improvements in enjoying and achieving and positive contribution.

There are three actions and two recommendations from this report

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection 12 actions were set. Ten have been met while two have been partially met.

The manager was requested to ensure young people's health plans reflect their needs and for these to be reviewed and updated, particularly because of smoking. In all young people's files there is now a smoking management plan that looks at the triggers why young people smoke. A new smoking policy has been produced showing that cigarettes will not be bought for any young people.

The second action was to ensure all 'looked after children' documents are up to date including placement plans parts one and two. A review of all 'looked after children' documents show that all medical consents are now being completed and all documentation has been updated and signed.

The third action was for all local authorities to give consent for the use of electronic monitoring devices. Documentation in young people's files show that social workers and parents have signed and agreed to the surveillance cameras within the home.

The fourth action was regarding measures of discipline including the effectiveness of sanctions. Individual sanction records now show the duration of the sanction, the effectiveness of the sanction, how it benefits the young person and young people's comments.

The fifth action concerned the locking systems on one of the internal doors. Plans and reports from the maintenance service show the reasoning of the locks and how they operate when the fire alarms are sounded.

The sixth action related to improving the recording of significant views, discussions and expressed opinions. The home now operates a new format called 'It's time to have your say'. Although it has only been in place for a couple of months, the questionnaire shows young people's feelings about their care, education, health and future plans.

The seventh action concerned young people's participation in education. All young people are now in full-time education and are succeeding well. Young people are receiving certificates for the hard work and cooperation in classes.

The eight action looked at ensuring how a young person's care will be met before providing accommodation. Although there have been no new admissions since the previous inspection, the home now uses a matching consideration checklist. The checklist looks at young people's age, gender and any obvious risk that would deem the placement to be inappropriate. The checklist also measures risks regarding location, compatibility and education needs.

The ninth action was to ensure that all young people at all times are treated in a manner which is consistent with the home's Statement of Purpose. The home's Statement of Purpose has been revamped showing all-stars qualifications and the introduction of the new induction programme.

The 10th action was to ensure all staff receive appropriate training, in particular with regard to medication and therapeutic techniques. Attachment therapy training has recently commenced with the management of the home. At present the staff team have not had the opportunity to complete a training course. This action has only been partially met and will remain an action from this inspection. All staff have received training in medication and the safe handling of medication.

The 11th action was in regard to the manager's application for registration. The

manager's application has been received by Ofsted and is currently being processed.

The 12th action was for the manager to improve the quality of care by undertaking monthly Registration 34 monitoring checks. A review of Schedule 6 records is in operation at reviews or on a monthly basis. However, staff files have not been checked with regards to references. A new policy on staff files is being implemented which will ensure that all staff references are verified either by telephone, email or a registered letter. This action has only been partially met and will remain an action from this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are receiving a satisfactory service that is focused on their emotional well-being and health needs. Staff actively engage young people in a range of health-related topics that support them to learn about their own health and fitness. Young people are involved in both compiling the menu each week and cooking their own meals. Staff talk to young people about nutritious ingredients such as fresh fruit and vegetables and encourage young people to try and use these ingredients every day in their diet.

Health care plans include information about medical conditions. These provide staff with knowledge about a young person's specific health needs. Previous concerns raised about young people receiving cigarettes from staff members has been addressed and resolved. Young people have completed questionnaires about their addiction to cigarettes showing why they need to smoke, their feelings about stopping smoking and how, for example, some young people have become actively involved in the local gym. However, the new written smoking policy is not clear about why young people's cigarettes are being held in the staff room, and handed out to young people when requested. Staff ensure that young people attend health appointments, such as visiting the General Practitioner, dentist and opticians as required. Young people have a range of health professionals to support them throughout their placement. These include physiotherapists, occupational therapists and community paediatricians. Therefore young people are provided with a high level of health care.

Procedures are safely followed and records of when medication is given out are regularly monitored. Medication is stored, audited and disposed of following correct procedures. Most staff have received training on specific administration processes. They consult with the relevant medical professionals about the effects of medication. As a result, they reduce the risk of young people being harmed by the misuse of medicine.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected and they know that information about them is confidential and that they can make and receive private phone calls. Young people's social workers or parents have signed an agreement to the use of the surveillance cameras within the home. All discussions regarding young people's welfare and care are held within the boundaries of managers' and staff's offices. Staff are mindful not to discuss sensitive information in the presence of other young people or their families.

Staff take complaints seriously. The home has received four formal complaints in the recent past. Young people are encouraged to raise their concerns as soon as possible. Staff listen to these concerns and respond quickly to them. This prevents minor issues becoming more serious and helps young people to trust their carers. These practices help young people to feel secure and to feel their voice can be heard. Therefore, the home takes complaints seriously and ensures that no issues remain unresolved.

Arrangements for safeguarding children are largely satisfactory and children are protected. The Registered Manager has links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and a policy and procedure are in place. All staff have had basic training in safeguarding procedures.

The home's policy on responding to young people who are absent without permission is available to all staff. Records indicate a reduction in young people going missing without authority in the past two months. They are given the opportunity to discuss, with staff, the reasons behind this behaviour. This has enabled staff to understand young people's feelings, particularly about parents and residents of the home. The home uses risk assessments and reporting procedures effectively to support the safe return of young people to the home. Improvements in recording and actions taken to keep all young people safe from being missing without permission have effectively reduced the risk.

The staff treat bullying as a serious matter. They challenge bullying when it occurs and work with young people to help them understand the consequences of bullying for themselves and the victim. Staff are also sensitive to incidents of racist bullying. They seek to develop the respect of young people for each other's culture and identity.

Staff understand the behaviour management policies for the home. They adhere to procedures on using sanctions and physical interventions to manage behaviour. Sanctions are recorded to show the evaluation of the effectiveness of this action. For example, a recent sanction was given due to damage of a television. The young people were given the opportunity to discuss the appropriate sanction. The amount that young people would pay back for the damage was agreed. The duration of the sanction was discussed, including options for reducing the duration of the sanction.

This method of behaviour management has benefited young people in recognising that their behaviour is sometimes not acceptable. However, with support, help and assistance from the staff they can start to understand how to take responsibility for their actions within the home and outside of the building.

Rewards are creative and individual to each young person. All staff receive training in managing behaviour and physical restraints. Staff record all incidents using a range of recording systems. Diversity plans and therapeutic plans show the responsibilities and support the individual young people require from the staff. However, as all staff have not been appropriately trained in therapeutic approaches, this is misleading because therapeutic care plans state that all young people within the home live in a therapeutic environment.

The health and safety measures of this home ensure young people, staff and visitors are protected in line with policy and procedures. Regular checks to fire safety, including fire drills, ensure staff are aware of what actions to take. Portable appliance testing and maintenance checks are completed annually. Electrical wiring certification is up to date as well as public and employee liability insurance. All internal fire doors have been assessed and show clearly how they operate when the fire alarm is triggered.

The recruitment of staff is undertaken in accordance with the organisation's policies. Checks include a Criminal Records Bureau check before any staff member is allowed to work directly with children. However, not all references have been verified. New policies and procedures for the recruitment of staff are in the process of being completed which will include verifying all references with either a telephone call, email or a letter on headed paper. A staffing audit on existing personnel files is to take place within the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Key workers provide good support to young people. They establish plans, help young people to achieve them and ensure each young person's individual needs are met. The new format of 'It's time to have a say' supports and acknowledges issues of gender, disability, race, culture and difference. All young people have completed a booklet over the past two months. This has been helpful in assessing the young people's individual concerns and needs.

All young people attend full-time education and are fully supported by the staff. There is close liaison between the schools and the home with regular visits, meetings and reviews of the young people's progress. Education plans are completed and kept on file. These provide achievable targets for the young people to meet which the staff also support. Young people's educational needs are therefore met.

Staff work with young people to develop activity planning. Young people have opportunities to express their views on what they would like to do and staff take

account of these views. This support from staff for the individual talents and interests of young people is assisting them to lead more fulfilling lives.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Care plans assist staff to progress young people's placements in a supportive and well-understood way. Essential information within the plans include details about education, contact with families and health. Young people's cultural identity, religious and spiritual needs and communication ability are fully recorded. Clinical therapists have drawn up the internal care plans for the young people. Although clear in objectives and actions, these are difficult to follow as the majority of staff have not received training in the therapeutic approach specified in young people's plans. Only the management of the home have commenced a course relating to a therapeutic approach towards young people's behaviour.

Reviews fully include the views of parents and carers and are held within timescales. The needs of young people are clearly identified and recommendations are made as a result of these discussions. Parents are welcome to visit the young people regularly. Staff work in partnership with families to support young people to maintain regular contact. This positively impacts on the overall quality of care provided.

Young people are introduced to the home in a way that meets their individual needs. They usually visit the home on a number of occasions prior to an overnight stay to enable them to meet staff and acclimatise themselves. The management of the home insists all paperwork is complete and up to date prior to the young person's admission. A recently developed matching consideration checklist considers the compatibility between the young person referred and existing residents. Matching also considers the young person's education needs, health needs, absconding records, and an initial assessment of staffing numbers required. All young people's 'looked after children' documentation is now in place and kept up to date.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with a safe and comfortable home which is domestic in style and layout. The location of the property provides young people with a degree of privacy because it is set back from the main road and has its own rear gardens. The accommodation is maintained to a good standard and it is kept clean. By improving the decoration of the home, introducing soft furnishings and pictures and taking responsibility for keeping the home clean and tidy, staff provide the young people with an everyday home environment. This is important in helping young people to feel more like their friends and peers in the wider community.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home's Statement of Purpose, policies and procedures make it clear how the staff work and what young people can expect. The young people's guide provides easy to understand information for young people. As a result, young people, their families and their social workers are able to make good decisions about whether the home is the right place for young people to live.

Staff in the home receive training and support, both of which increase their knowledge and understanding of their role in the home. This helps them to focus on the needs of the young people and to work more effectively with them. Most staff have completed, or are undertaking, National Vocational Qualifications. As a result, they become confident about their job role and individual levels of responsibility very quickly. Young people benefit greatly from this positive approach as they are cared for by motivated and suitable staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home operates in a way that demonstrates a clear recognition of the varied and different needs young people have. Each young person has a plan of care in place that fully identifies each individual's needs in terms of their ethnicity, race, religion, culture, gender, disability and language.

The manager is effective and committed. She has a good understanding of the role of a manager and issues relating to good practice in the care of young people. Her application for registration as manager is currently being processed by Ofsted. The manager has good systems in place to monitor the operation of the home and the overall progress of each young person. The support offered by senior management enables the manager to further develop her understanding of regulation procedures and monitoring tools. Regular visits are made to the home by organisational representatives and findings are reflected in written monitoring reports.

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
7	improve the recording of significant views, discussions and expressed opinions of young people (Regulation 11)	31/12/2010
31	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training. In particular	31/12/2010

	this relates to all staff attending specific training in therapeutic techniques and administration and safe handling of medication training (Regulation 27.4)	
2	ensure all placement plans are consistent with any plan for the care of the child prepared by the placing authority, in particular in offering a therapeutic environment. (Regulation 12)	31/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the placement plan for each child sets out clearly the objectives of the placement and how the effectiveness of the placement is to be assessed in relation to each major element of the plan (NMS 2.1)
- ensure all employment references are vetted for their credibility. (NMS 27)