

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanne Vyas
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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

This is a children's home for four young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the age of 10 and 18 years. It is part of an organisation and is located on the outskirts of a small town with local facilities including a post office and shops. There is access to public transport and the home has its own transport for trips to the wider community.

The home is reasonably well maintained, decorated and furnished. Young people have their own single bedrooms. Communal space comprises of a lounge, dining room, kitchen and education room. There is a grassed area to the rear of the house, with a patio and outdoor seating.

Two young people currently live in the home, both of whom were present during the inspection.

Summary

At this full unannounced inspection all key standards were inspected.

This home has been through a period of mismanagement resulting in a high staff turnover and low staff morale. A new Registered Manager has been appointed and has already made significant changes and staff now feel well supported. The staff team are qualified, caring and competent. They are able to provide good care for young people and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. A young person said, 'Its like a proper home'. Another thought that the best thing about the home is the 'calm atmosphere in the home and the area'. Staff fully support young people in their education. The young people are protected by robust recruitment procedures. The Registered Manager has a strong commitment to improving the service.

Some areas of weakness were found. Most staff do not have any food hygiene training and the food handling and hygiene routines are poor. Admissions to the home are not consistent with its Statement of Purpose therefore, there is no stability to placements which may cause the young people to feel insecure. Young people are not provided with a telephone that they can access without the knowledge of staff. Records, including the fire risk assessment and placement plans are not comprehensive. Physical restrictions within the home have not been agreed with the placing authority. Monitoring systems are generally very good but have failed to address the inconsistencies that exist between the Statement of Purpose and past and current admissions.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Manager has complied with most of the actions and recommendations made at the previous inspection. She ensures that the fire log book is accurately completed. The staffing policy is now in the Statement of Purpose and there is a risk assessment for lone working. However, an action was set to ensure that admissions are consistent with the aims of the home as outlined in the Statement of Purpose. This has not been achieved as the home continues to have a high number of admissions. Young people have left the home for a variety of reasons, which has meant that they have not had a stable placement. The effects of this are

evident with the current residents, who are also on short-term placements. The home also has not complied with a recommendation to ensure fridge and freezer temperatures are taken daily.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people take an active role in planning, shopping and helping to prepare meals. This is something they take pride in. Young people said that the food is alright. The staff cater for special dietary needs or preferences. A young person said, 'If you don't like the food, they will make you a different meal'. Meals are a sociable occasion where young people and staff sit together round the dining table. Most staff have not received any food hygiene training. At the time of the inspection, food in the fridge was not correctly labelled, indicating when the food was opened and when it should be disposed of. Eggs were not stored in the fridge. Fridge and freezer temperatures are not taken and cooked food is not consistently probed to ensure it is cooked thoroughly. Some areas of the kitchen were not clean. During the inspection, the kitchen was thoroughly cleaned and unlabelled food thrown away. The Registered Manager made arrangements to discuss food handling and hygiene routines in the next staff meeting.

Staff are focussed and committed to ensuring a good quality provision for health care for young people living at this home. They are proactive and responsive to the emotional and health care needs of the young people. All young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians. They also have access to other healthcare professionals including mental health services. Each young person has a health plan which is up-to-date. Parents, where appropriate, and social workers have been involved in formulating the plan and they are reviewed on a regular basis.

The safe handling of medication is well managed in this home. Staff receive training in the safe handling of medication during their induction programme. Two staff always prepare and administer medication. The home only use prescribed medication and there is very little medication in this home. Medication is accurately recorded, received and disposed of appropriately. The medication cupboard is secure.

All accidents are recorded and first aid is given as necessary. Most staff are trained in first aid and renew their training as appropriate.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The privacy of young people is respected by staff. The living arrangements provide space where they can relax and easily find privacy away from others if they wish. All bathrooms have appropriate locks on the doors. Staff knock on bedroom doors before entering. All records are kept confidentially. Young people's issues are not discussed openly. Young people said, 'Yes staff give us privacy' and 'No, don't hear them talk about other young people'.

The safety and rights of both staff and young people are protected. Staff are concerned about keeping young people safe and are competent in their knowledge of protecting them. Young people said they feel safe living at this home. Staff receive training on safeguarding young people as part of their induction and then at regular intervals. All bullying is taken seriously and dealt with effectively. Young people said there is very little bullying and everyone is aware of the consequences for bullying and these take effect immediately. The high staffing levels, vigilance and working practices adopted by the home go some way to reducing opportunities

for bullying to occur. For example, staff said they work with young people to develop their understanding of the diversity of their community and the importance of tolerance of others. However, young people were not able to confirm this work takes place. The home has a written procedure for action when young people are absent without authority. Young people go missing from the home regularly but rarely for very long and not overnight. Young people are enabled by the procedures to return to the safety of the home in a supported manner. The home notifies all those persons and appropriate authorities listed in Schedule 5 of The Children's Homes Regulations of the significant events that have occurred and lets parents and other people who are significant to the young person, know about the event where appropriate.

Concerns raised by parents and young people are appropriately and swiftly resolved. Opportunities exist for young people to make complaints within the weekly house and key worker meetings as well as informally through daily contact with staff. Young people are fully aware of the complaints procedure and are given feedback about the outcome of their complaints. A young person said, 'If we get upset, staff comfort us and ask us what's wrong'.

Staff view young people positively and there is a family atmosphere in the home. Staff are given training during their induction, which includes de-escalation as well as physical intervention. The course is refreshed every year. Physical intervention is used as a last resort. There is a minimal amount of physical intervention carried out in this home. The behaviour management plans are comprehensive. Sanctions are applied fairly and appropriately. Young people agreed that the rules are alright and sanctions are given fairly. Staff effectively manage challenging behaviour in a calm and professional manner. High staffing levels, staff competence and comprehensive risk assessments ensure the safety of the young people who live in the home.

Young people are protected by robust recruitment procedures. Safety checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and three satisfactory references.

The home has comprehensive risk assessments for most aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire and young people's behaviour and activities. These assessments have taken into account the daily activities in and outside the home. However, the fire risk assessment does not include the storage of stationery in the boiler room. This could be a potential fire hazard. All staff are given fire safety training during their induction and fire drills are carried out regularly. Fire safety equipment is checked regularly and a detailed record kept. All visitors sign into the building and must show identification. Food handling and hygiene routines are poor therefore young people are not protected by the home's health and safety procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people appeared busy throughout the inspection, either with their education, shopping, playing on the trampoline or going for a walk. However, young people's comments included; 'Can be quite hard as we have to stay in all the time, which is boring. We can do activities but not everyday. One, through the week and one at the weekend;' 'Activities include cinema, bowling, ice skating, whatever we want to do;' 'Rest of the time, during the day, education and after that, we sit around or go for free activities with the staff, like walks or museums. Went to Magna, a science museum.' The home has its own transport for young people. Records show

that young people are involved in planning activities, outings and holidays. They were all looking forward to going to 'the seaside' at the weekend.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and its value for young people. All young people are in full-time education, which is hosted within the home in a room put aside for education purposes. The home employs a teacher for this purpose. Staff support young people in their education.

Individual support is detailed in each young person's placement plan. Observations and discussions with staff demonstrate that staff ensure each young person's individual needs are fully met. The practical individual support is reflected in the records of key worker sessions along with the variety of planning documentation that is in place. However, this does not include identifying any religious and cultural needs a young person may have and what this means to them. The staff know the young people well and are knowledgeable of their individual needs and the implications this has for their care.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are able to provide a good standard of care to young people and meet their individual needs with the knowledge and understanding they have of them. However, planning documentation does not fully evidence this. A clear and detailed placement plan and risk assessments are in place for each young person, although plans do not specify a young person's cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met. Placement plans are reviewed regularly. Young people, their parents, where appropriate, and their social worker are consulted about the placement plans and subsequent reviews. Any changes to the plans are effectively communicated to the team. However, these are not always recorded in the plan. A record is made at the end of each shift for each young person, documenting their mood, activities, behaviour and so on. Social workers and parents, where appropriate, are provided with monthly reports on the progress of young people.

Statutory reviews are taking place within the required timescale. Records of the meetings are held alongside reports prepared by staff prior to reviews taking place. Collectively they provide evidence that details areas of progress.

The Statement of Purpose clearly sets out the home's admission policy. However, admissions to the home are not consistent with its Statement of Purpose as they tend to be short-term placements. Therefore, there is no stability to placements which may cause the young people to feel insecure. However, young people are supported during the admission process and when leaving the home.

Staff are committed to working in partnership with the young people and their families, where appropriate, social workers and external agencies to promote the welfare of young people in their care.

Young people are given the opportunity to make choices and decisions on a day-to-day basis. They recognise that staff are supportive in helping and guiding them towards making positive decisions for themselves. As a result of consultation with young people, a number of improvements have been made to the home including DVD players in bedrooms, access to mobile phones and redecoration of the house. Young people are offered regular key worker

meetings and weekly house meetings. A young person said, 'I attend the house meetings. They are useful. We've had one for this week'. Young people are also given the opportunity to attend a forum for young people across the organisation. There, they discuss key issues such as carrying weapons, smoking and drugs. The relationships between young people and staff are good. Young people are relaxed in the company of staff and are quick to approach them with any issues they may have.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people live in a homely environment with good quality furnishings. There is a large amount of communal space. However, communal areas such as the lounge and kitchen and young people's bedrooms are routinely locked during education time. These restrictions have not been agreed within each young person's placement plan. The young people have good facilities. Their bedrooms have not yet been personalised but the young people have not been in the home very long. They have plans to redecorate and put up posters. A young person said, 'My rooms OK but I want to decorate to make it look nice'. The home is tidy and well maintained. Some areas, such as the kitchen, are not cleaned properly. Young people value their home and their surroundings.

Young people do not have access to a phone which they can use without the knowledge of staff, for example, if they wanted to call Child Line or their social worker.

None of the young people currently have a leaving care plan due to their age but staff encourage them to carry out a variety of tasks independently or with support. These include cooking, shopping and cleaning. Staff provide a consistent and committed approach to enabling young people to successfully transition into adulthood.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There is a clear Statement of Purpose but it does not reflect the practice and functions of the home with regards to admissions. Staff provide each young person with a guide to the home when they first arrive. This ensures that young people understand the ethos of the home, the rules and the type of activities they can expect to be involved in. The commitment to promoting equality and diversity is explicit in this information.

Staff training is supported by the organisation. An annual programme covers most mandatory training which all staff are expected to undertake. However, most staff have not completed a food hygiene course and not all staff have received equality and diversity training. All staff, however, have qualified in either National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level three or above in the Care of Children and Young People.

There are good staffing levels to meet the needs of young people. A record of staff shifts is recorded on the home's rota and this shows there is a balance of gender and cultural backgrounds of staff wherever this is possible. Staff hand over meetings ensure that each shift is appropriately planned and issues arising from earlier are competently communicated. There are also monthly team meetings. Most staff have regular supervisions and the Registered Manager has implemented systems to ensure all staff are supervised regularly. Staff comment that they feel well supported and are given good professional direction.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory.

Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of young people's plans also supports this commitment although this isn't comprehensive. Young people receive an individual service in the home which is designed to meet their personal needs. However, over the last 18 months, young people haven't remained in placement for any length of time, therefore, the objectives of the placement are not always achieved. All staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met until their placement ends.

This home has been through a period of mismanagement resulting in a high staff turnover and low staff morale. A new Registered Manager has been appointed and has already made significant changes. The monitoring of the home by the Registered Manager is evidenced by regular signing of records and completion of a report on the functions and practice of the home. However, food hygiene and storage is not adequately monitored to ensure the safety of the young people and young people continue to be admitted on a short-term basis. A senior member of the organisation visits at least once a month to check how the home is run and produces a report detailing actions the home need to do to improve. Short-term admissions have not been addressed in this report. Young people's records are kept in good order and reflect most of the information necessary for staff to care and support them throughout the placement.

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
26	ensure all parts of the home to which children have access are so far as reasonably practicable free from hazards to their safety. This specifically refers to food handling and hygiene routines (Regulation 23)	30 June 2009
5	ensure that admissions are consistent with the aims of the home outlined in the Statement of Purpose (Regulation 4)	31 July 2009
24	ensure children accommodated in the home, subject to agreed restrictions, are provided at all reasonable times with access to a telephone on which to make and receive calls in private without reference to persons working in the home (Regulation 15).	31 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff involved in preparing food for others have received appropriate training in food handling and hygiene (NMS 10.9)

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- ensure the fire risk assessment specifies all potential risks of fire, such as the boiler room where stationery is stored (NMS 26.2)
 - ensure the placement plan for each young person includes their cultural, religious, language and racial needs and how they will be met (NMS 2.1)
 - ensure that the agreed outcomes of reviews are reflected in the day-to-day care of the child as provided in the placement plan (NMS 3.1)
 - ensure the home is kept clean (NMS 24.3)
 - ensure physical restrictions on normal movement within the home are used only in relation to a child where the restriction has been agreed within their placement plan and are used only where necessary to safeguard and promote that child's welfare. Such restrictions do not impose similar restrictions on other children (NMS 23.5)
 - ensure there are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose, ensuring that any inconsistencies are reported and addressed (NMS 33.1).