

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Warren Clarke
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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

This children's home provides accommodation for three young people aged from 10 years to 17. The home is located on the outskirts of two local towns. There is reasonable access to local services and bus routes into the main shopping areas. The home is a detached house offering individual bedrooms and two bathrooms for young people on the first floor where the staff sleeping-in accommodation is also located. On the ground floor there is: a lounge, kitchen; laundry and the general office. There is a large mature garden at the rear of the building.

At the time of inspection there were three young people, average age 14 years, resident. All of them were seen and they all contributed to the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced interim inspection assessed the home's performance against the national minimum standards relevant to keeping the young people safe from harm, abuse and neglect. It also assessed progress in areas where, at the last inspection, weaknesses were identified.

Concentrated work has been done to establish a more stable situation in the home. The registered person and the manager have improved leadership and management. This stability has provided the structure whereby staff are supported to respond more effectively to young people whose behaviour placed them at risk of abuse and exploitation. The young people are calmer and more content and express greater feelings of safety and optimism. For example, young people who have lived at the home for long enough to be affected by the home's coherent safeguarding strategy, no longer place themselves of risk of harm and abuse and have been supported to modify their behaviour generally. This has been sufficiently effective to impact positively on other aspects of their lives, such as progress in their school and college work and improved confidence and self esteem.

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered person and the manager have made acceptable improvements in all areas where shortfalls were identified at the last inspection. Records of sanctions or punishment are now kept in an exclusive log in strict compliance with the national minimum standards. This ensures that these records may be monitored more accurately to identify whether any undesirable patterns are emerging. Young people are also now able to record, or have recorded for them, comments they may wish to make about any physical restraint to which they have been subject. This builds the

necessary safeguard into a form of control which is expected to be used judiciously.

Improvements in management have seen an increase in the number of care staff with appropriate qualifications, although some further improvement is necessary before the national minimum standard to which this relates is fully met. Currently the home is fully staffed. Only two members of the staff team are still in their period of probation thus providing greater stability and permanence for young people accommodated in the home. Repairs and maintenance issues, such as the broken oven door and replacement of floor covering in certain areas of the home have all been addressed. A new maintenance and repairs system has been introduced to ensure that in future, priority is given to timely repair or replacement of equipment, fixtures and fitting crucial to the young people's quality of care.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people in the home are provided with sufficient privacy and confidentiality which contributes to maintaining their dignity and safety. Each young person is allocated an exclusive lockable bedroom in which they are able to keep their personal possessions private and safe. Communal facilities such as bathrooms and toilets are also properly equipped to enable the young people to use them in private and without fear of embarrassment. Policies and procedures are effectively reflected in care practices. The young people's personal details are kept confidential and accessible to only those who are authorised. If staff have cause to search a young person's bedroom, to recover contraband or items which they may use to cause harm, is done sensitively and within strict procedures.

Young people, and others who may have concerns about the quality of service, are provided access to a clear complaints procedure. It complies with all the requirements of national minimum standards and current good practice. This procedure is actively and appropriately promoted. Where young people make complaints, even informally, they are taken seriously, fairly considered and resolved satisfactorily. There is an ethos of openness in the home thus where young people's complaints suggest there may be safeguarding implications, these are referred to the appropriate authorities for consideration.

Young people express feelings of safety in the home. Staff are appropriately trained and sufficiently aware of the nature of abuse and neglect to work effectively within the home's safeguarding policy. This enables them to provide safe care and protect children from abuse. Staff work productively with statutory agencies to protect the young people. They have good working understanding of the procedures of the Local

Children Safeguarding Board's protocols for occasions when safeguarding issues cross local authority borders. Although there are sometimes turbulent periods in the home owing to the risk at which some young people place themselves, staff have worked skilfully to address this. Accordingly, the young people express greater contentment with their circumstances and significant success is apparent in work done to lessen some of their risky behaviour.

The home has made significant progress in establishing an anti-bullying culture. Staff and young people are familiar with the comprehensive anti-bullying policy, which is promoted on an ongoing basis. There is a common understanding of the nature and impact of bullying, the steps to prevent it and the appropriate response when it occurs. There is imaginative alignment of the anti-bullying initiative with the home's equality and diversity policy so that young people's and staff behaviour reflect the home's 'respect for and fairness to all' message. Young people who comment on this say that there is no bullying currently. However, staff recognise that even with an effective anti-bullying strategy, it has been discovered that some bullying has occurred in ways that could not be reasonably anticipated or detected. Nevertheless, staff are reviewing the events to establish whether any lessons can be learned to enhance the current strategy.

An effective procedure is in place which staff follow successfully when a young person absconds or is absent from the home without permission. The procedure is in line with the local joint police and local authority missing from care protocol. This takes account of the young person's vulnerability and the particular circumstances of their absence. Staff properly recognise the risk at which some young people place themselves when missing and proceed competently and successfully to recover them. Young people who comment say that the home is a good place to live. This is in line with the vast improvement in the rate of young people absenting themselves from the home without permission.

Staff have a good understanding of the factors that underlie aspects of undesirable behaviours sometimes exhibited by the young people. The comprehensive behaviour management policy provides a sound framework that guides staff in this aspect of care. It also contributes to the apparent success achieved in modifying the young people's conduct, particularly in those who have been resident for a sufficient time for the influence of the behaviour management approach to have an enduring impact.

The behaviour management policy provides safeguards for young people from unfair treatment and unacceptable punishment. It ensures that staff focus on encouraging good behaviour and specifies clearly punishment or sanctions which are not permissible. Staff respond to undesirable behaviour on an individual basis within the young person's agreed individual handling plan when necessary. For example, young people are set personal goals linked to reinforcing desirable conduct and personal development, achievement of which are rewarded. This approach encourages young people to understand their behaviour, take responsibility for it and have an awareness of their own progress. For example, some young people are now able to exercise sufficient control of their behaviour that this is being reflected in their

progress and achievements in other areas such as school and college work.

Safety and security of the young people are given a high priority. For example, the home's environment and the various activities involved in the young people's care have been risk-assessed and, where necessary, control measures are embedded to remove or reduce hazards. Safety is also promoted by comprehensive fire precautions and robust security measures that provide effective protection from intruders.

Young people say that good relationships exist between them and staff. All the staff are generally kind and helpful. There are staff with which young people have a natural affinity. This accords with the care that the registered provider takes to ensure that staff employed to look after the young people are suitable for their posts. For example, staff do not commence work in the home until there is a satisfactory outcome to the rigorous process of vetting in terms of references and criminal records check. The coherent approach to safeguarding the young people also extends to control and supervision of official visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.