

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 to provide care for up to four girls between 11 and under 17 years of age and have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is a period two-storey detached house, located one mile from the nearest village. The home is set in seven acres of grounds which provide a garden, patio area and fields and paddocks. The local town provides access to schools, shops, health and leisure facilities.

The home operates a small-holding with vegetable and fruit gardens. A number of animals are kept including horses, chickens, ducks, pigs, sheep, and various small companion animals, including house cats. Young people have the opportunity to work alongside staff in developing and maintaining the grounds and looking after the animals. The young people attend the company's school provision; this is approximately a 20 minutes drive from the home.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection and all key standards were looked at during the inspection.

The overall this service is judged as good. In three outcome areas the service is judged as outstanding. The staff team provide very good support to young people and are skilled at helping young people take greater responsibility for their lives and futures. The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

All of the areas for development identified at the previous inspection have been satisfactorily addressed.

One action and two recommendations have been made at this inspection. Areas for further improvement include the consistency and monitoring of all recordings, the gathering of key information from placing social workers and risk assessments relating to unauthorised absences.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection one action and three recommendations were made.

The action was to ensure that the behaviour leading to the use of any measure of control or restraint be fully recorded. Since the last inspection a new record book has been introduced and now describes events leading to a restraint in more detail. Four

restraints since last inspection. This action is now met.

In addition three recommendations made. The manager was asked to ensure that the sanctions recorded within the dedicated sanction record is clear; in particular, ensure that the amount of the financial reparation is entered in the record. The records of sanctions and reparations are now clear and this recommendation is met.

The manager was also asked to ensure the staff (not children) are able to open the door to the ground floor toilet from the outside in case of emergency. All toilets used by young people are now fitted with suitable locks and this recommendation is met.

The manager was further asked to ensure each member of staff has a Personal Development Plan in place. All staff now have regular appraisals and personal development plans have been introduced for staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with a balanced nutritional diet in order to promote a healthy lifestyle. The majority of meals are prepared from fresh ingredients, some convenience meals are served as an occasional treat. All food eaten by young people is recorded and monitored in order to identify any dietary trends or patterns. Young people are encouraged to prepare meals with some staff support and on occasions shop for household items. Fresh ingredients, including free range eggs from the home's own chicken and ducks, are used where possible. Young people care for the animals as well as collecting the eggs regularly. Each young person is participating in a programme aimed at promoting greater independence; though at this stage they do not have formal leaving care plans. Meals are usually taken at the dining room table and are pleasant social occasions during which young people and staff come together, and discuss events of the day. This is seen as a very important opportunity for social interaction. Any special dietary need based on health or cultural needs can be met with specialist advice being sought from young people, previous carers, or professionals with specialist knowledge. Young people and staff are aware of the importance of fresh fruit and vegetables in a balanced diet.

All young people have personal health plans identified as part of their placement plan; these are drawn up in consultation with young people shortly after admission. Health plans include physical and emotional well-being. All young people are registered with local health professionals. Young people say that they are able to select a doctor of their choice. Specific requests for a doctor based on culture would be considered by requesting information on other medical practices in the area. Minor illnesses are treated at home and if necessary urgent medical appointments, such as emergency dental treatment, is sought. Staff and young people display a caring attitude to other young people who may be feeling unwell. Specialist medical services, such as a clinical psychologist and drug and alcohol service, are available to

young people if necessary. Staff show a high level of awareness and judgement about the appropriate timeliness of psychological intervention. Routine medical assessments are regularly arranged and any delays are 'chased up' by the manager and staff. All young people have personal health plans as part of their placement plan and all have appropriately signed consents. Detailed records are maintained of all medical appointments, accidents, illness and any treatment given to young people.

Young people are protected by robust policies and procedures for the administration of medicines. All staff receive training in first aid and the administration of medicines. There is a policy on the self-administration of medicines linked to individual risk assessments. All medicines are securely held in separate metal cabinets inside a locked room. Stocks of medicines are checked each day and audited each week by the manager and at monthly intervals by the Regulation 33 visitor. Stock accorded with the record. Medicine records are all accurately signed for; all staff provide specimen signatures. Unused medicines are returned to the pharmacy and a receipt is obtained. This practice is very good.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The safety of young people is promoted by sound practice and procedures that are known to and followed by staff. Young people say that that staff knock on doors and call out before entering bedrooms and all young people are encouraged to respect each others privacy. Telephone calls can be made on a pay telephone in privacy and young people may have their own mobile telephone if risk assessed as appropriate to do so. Young people say they are happy with this arrangement. There is sufficient space within the home for young people to hold private meetings. Staff are trained in confidentiality of information and are aware of what information they need to share with other professionals in order to safeguard young people. There are systems to ensure that the identity of any enquirer is verified.

The company has a complaints policy and young people are given advice in the young people's handbook on how to raise any concern. The complaints records are well recorded and There have been no complaints made since the last inspection. The records are regularly audited.

The home follows established company safeguarding procedures and staff show awareness of referral procedures. There is no central register of child protection allegations, however, detailed records of significant incidents are held and these are monitored regularly by the manager and Regulation 33 visitor. The manager and staff receive regular internal safeguarding training updates. The local authority safeguarding policies are available to staff.

Young people are given comment cards which are directed through a locked letter box system to a senior manager, if they do not wish to raise concerns with staff members. Young people say this system works well.

Staff are vigilant in order to protect young people from bullying. Young people are encouraged to talk openly about any concerns they have and are supported in developing a caring environment for each other.

Each young person has a personal risk assessment as part of their placement plan. This is regularly reviewed and includes details of how staff should respond if the young person is absent without authority. However not all records show how long staff should wait before reporting a young person as missing. Young people are given the opportunity to talk with staff, their families or social worker about any reasons for them being absent on their return to the home. Records of any absence are well recorded and appropriate notifications are made. There are 43 incidents of absence recorded since March 2010. All placements are appropriately reviewed with placing social workers in the event of repeated absences.

Young people are supported in developing positive behaviours by a behaviour management policy based on praise, self-esteem building and rewards. Sanctions and physical interventions are only used as a last resort. At the last inspection an action was made that the home records in greater detail the behaviour leading up to a sanction or physical intervention being used, and to describe the type of hold applied. The records of the use of restraint now include more detail and the action is met. However, in one instance, the record is not signed by the person making the entry, and an injury was sustained by a staff member but the record provides no detail of the severity of the injury. The review of the effectiveness of the intervention does not provide any overview of the long-term effect of the intervention.

The safety of young people and staff is promoted by extensive use of risk assessments for individuals, the building and premises, activities, the outbuildings and the risk presented by looking after the animals. There are regular reviews of all risk assessments, including ones for activities. All electrical apparatus is regularly checked and boilers are regularly serviced. The fire safety records are well maintained and equipment regularly tested. All staff have fire safety training and the record of fire drills exceeds the requirements.

The company has robust systems for the safe recruitment of staff. The home does not use agency staff and young people benefit from the stability of being looked after by a core group of staff employed within the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has an allocated case worker who is responsible for managing the progress of the case. However, all staff are encouraged to undertake daily interaction with each young person and are fully aware of individually identified needs and how they will be met. Staff are highly motivated towards meeting the specific needs of young people, and are aware of the need to promote self-esteem and self-confidence. The programme of activities for each young person is designed

to achieve this objective. For example they work hard to re-establish a pattern of regular school attendance after long periods of non-school attendance. Some young people are offered a programme of home tuition aimed at a re-introduction to school.

The staff set clear expectations regarding school attendance and support young people in regular school attendance. Liaison between teaching and care staff is good, with twice daily handovers taking place. Care staff support the school programme by continuing work, such as 16 plus work that young people start in school. There are facilities in the home for continuing school work at home, but homework is rarely set.

There are a wide range of leisure activities available to young people, these include animal care, horse riding, swimming, and visiting community based leisure activities and larger trips to theme parks. In addition there are home based activities such as cooking, indoor games, books magazines and computer games. Young people say that there are a wide range of leisure activities available for them to select from. Activities such as animal care are specifically designed to promote self-esteem and personal responsibility for each young person.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has a placement plan which is drawn up shortly after admission. Young people are invited to attend their planning meetings and are supported in contributing to the planning of their placement. Staff seek pre-placement information from placing authorities and in some cases previous placements. Most young people are invited to visit the home prior to admission and are expected to make a commitment to the placement prior to being placed. Young people say that they think it is good to be offered that choice and value that opportunity.

Placement plans are detailed and are updated following any significant changes or developments. Plans include how the staff will meet the young person's needs on a day to day basis. Regular one to one sessions are held and are thoroughly recorded. Young people have access to the daily recordings in their personal journals.

Young people's placement reviews are held within statutory timescales and the manager will remind the placing authority if reviews are becoming overdue for any reason. Young people are supported in attending their reviews and contributing to the meeting. Young people say that their views are listened to and considered in the meetings.

The staff actively support contact arrangements as agreed in the placement plans. They provide transport to and from the home area, supervise contact and provide sufficient space for young people to meet family members in privacy. Staff are aware of the importance of promoting contact.

Young people are encouraged to participate in regular house meetings, informal

discussion, often at the meal table and one to one meetings with staff. An example of how young people are able to influence the day to day running of the home is the introduction of school uniform, which was requested by young people.

Relationships between young people and staff are excellent and young people say that the staff working at the home are very good and that they are able to talk with them about personal issues. Relationships are clearly based on mutual respect.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are supported in developing life and social skills that will enable them to live independent lives when they leave the home. Some skills are encouraged informally by expecting young people to contribute to the household chores. There is an individual challenge programme and a 16 plus living skills programme which helps young people, more formally, to develop independence skills. Young people are given the opportunity to plan and prepare meals, shop to a budget for household items, open bank accounts and arrange their own appointments, for example, with health care professionals. Young people are also offered the option of caring for the many animals that are looked after on the site. The home has its own horses, pigs, chicken, ducks and rabbits; there is also a house cat.

Young people receive a clothing allowance and are able to shop for clothes of their choice. Staff offer advice and guidance to young people on suitable items of clothing and shopping on a budget if requested.

The accommodation is of a very high standard and the home is spacious enough to fully meet the needs of each of the young people. The home is decorated and maintained to a very high standard. There are many personal features such as photographs, pictures and ornaments that create a pleasant domestic environment. There is a programme of maintenance and any damage is repaired very quickly so as not to detract from the pleasant domestic setting. Each young person has their own bedroom, which they can decorate and personalise. There are shared toilet and bathroom facilities for young people's use; each one is fitted with a suitable lock ensuring privacy.

This spacious home provides young people with a high standard of accommodation which promotes a family environment in a very rural setting. Only the staff rooms within the home are kept locked. The home is well maintained and decorated throughout; there is a rolling programme of refurbishment to ensure the good quality of the accommodation is maintained. Some care staff undertake minor maintenance tasks in the home and across the site. Cleaning standards are high. Every young person has their own bedroom which they can choose to personalise. The communal rooms provide sufficient space for everyone and enough room for young people to meet in private with their families and visitors.

The home is set in a rural area with several paddocks for the animals, out-buildings,

animal shelters, and fields. There are no near neighbours and the home's ample grounds provide young people with opportunities for solitude in safe and quiet surroundings. Staff transport young people into the local towns to access shops and community facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a Statement of purpose and young person's handbook that are reviewed regularly. The Statement of purpose accurately describes the service and is now fully up to date. The young person's handbook provides clear information for young people including what to do if they are unhappy with any aspect of the service and the expectations about behaviour. Young people say that they are treated fairly and that any sanctions are reasonable.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care practice in the home is based on sound principles and is clearly focussed on meeting the individual needs of young people in all outcome groups. The highly individualised approach to meeting young people's needs demonstrate a strong commitment to equality and diversity.

The manager and staff team are experienced and suitably qualified and supported. All staff receive regular supervision and have annual appraisals. The annual performance review leads to the development of the staff development programme. All staff members are clear about the limits of their responsibility and there are clear on call arrangements for staff outside of office hours. All staff have completed or are undertaking National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level three. Some senior staff hold NVQ level 4 or equivalent qualifications. All staff receive a comprehensive induction training programme. Staff say they are well trained and supported, which enhances the quality of care received by young people.

There are sufficient staff on duty on each shift to allow an appropriate response to each young person. Any staff absences are covered by an internal staff support team.

The quality of the service is monitored by the manager and a Regulation 33 visitor each month. The reports produced are detailed and cover each of the areas required. However the review of the quality of care produced by the manager against Regulation 34 does not include a summary statement identifying any patterns and trends nor any specific management action taken.

The records held by the home are generally well maintained and kept up to date. However young people's case files did not hold all of the information required in that they did not all hold copies of the placing authority's plan for the care of the young person and if applicable a copy of any care order. There is a policy for young people to see the records and contribute to them if requested.

The home is well managed.

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
35	obtain the information specified in Schedule 3 in respect of each child, in particular a copy of the placing authority's plan for the care of the child. (Reg 28(1))	30/09/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the written procedures covering any unauthorised absence from the home include the level of risk of harm to the child of any unauthorised absence, namely how long the child may be absent prior to being reported as missing. (NMS 19.2)
- ensure that the record of any use of restraint on a child includes the signature of the person making the entry, details of any injury caused to a child or any other person and a review of the effectiveness of the use of restraint. (NMS 22.9)