

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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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 cares for up to three children from six years to 17-years-old with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a semi-detached house with four bedrooms near the centre of the town. The location of the house enables young people to access a range of community facilities easily. It is close to local shops, public transport and other community facilities.

One young person living in the home took part in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This interim, unannounced inspection comments on the outcome areas staying safe and organisation. Progress against actions and recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

All the young people accommodated are experiencing stable placements and they are being looked after in a safe environment. There are no concerns relating to physical intervention and sanctions, safeguarding or missing from home. The responsible organisation worked well with other departments to secure more appropriate placements for some young people between inspections. Significant events were managed well between inspections. A child centred philosophy of care was at the forefront of decision making.

All staff are recruited correctly. A new manager was recently appointed. Ofsted received an application prior to this inspection. There is good hands-on support from the responsible organisation. The percentage of the staff team that hold relevant qualifications is improving.

Practice meets with the requirements of national minimum standards and associated regulations. Good standards of care are being provided and staff are knowledgeable about each resident's needs. There is good consultation and communication between those connected with the service and this means each young person is treated fairly. Meeting and reviews take place to monitor progress.

Health and safety is managed well. Maintenance is efficient. Young people value their surroundings and the resources within their home.

This report highlights an action and some recommendations to support practice developments. In the absence of a manager there had been significant delays in reporting notifications of serious events to Ofsted. Missing information did restrict the

monitoring of the home's operation, however, retrospective checks confirmed that challenging events had been managed well. In-house systems set up to monitor the home's operation had not always been effective in identifying poor practice.

The opinions and views of young people, family members and staff are not always being captured within the home's records. Valuable information that can be used to drive forward improvements is being missed. There is no home development plan. Some management records are not clear. Personnel files do not contain all the records to support robust recruitment procedures. The views of young people, involved in physical intervention, are not always being captured.

Improvements since the last inspection

Actions and recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or are in the process of being addressed in the case of ensuring timely reporting of significant events.

There is greater clarity of information within staff personnel files to show how staff are being recruited. Physical intervention training had been provided and a new recording format had been introduced to capture the views of young people following incidents. This format had been used once so this recommendation was repeated.

The response taken to health and safety at the home includes appropriate maintenance and servicing schedules for gas installations. The policy for managing medication away from the home had been reviewed. Practice was discussed and found to be suitable. There was no prescription medicines being used at the time of this inspection.

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.

Arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. A protocol is established with local police to report young people if they go missing without permission. There was a decrease in the number of reports being logged following the planned discharge of some residents. There is effective use of positive reinforcement as opposed to the use of sanctions and the young people respond very well to praise. Staff with key worker responsibilities uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to help them to achieve and develop.

Staff attend child protection training, in order that they can respond appropriately to

allegations or suspicions of abuse. Safeguarding policies are clear and staff practice is reflective of the procedural guidance within these policies. Policy and procedural guidance established at this home is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. The views of young people involved in incidents requiring physical intervention are not always being captured within the home's records.

Staff are knowledgeable about resident's needs and are able to support these needs on a day-to-day basis. No concerns were highlighted throughout the course of this inspection and the young people confirm that they are safe and happy. Relationships between staff and the young people are excellent and this creates a very relaxed environment for young people to fulfil their potential.

There had been a number of notifications of significant events made to Ofsted immediately prior to this inspection. Important information, dating back over a period of months, had not been forwarded in a timely manner. This restricted the monitoring of the home's operation. Retrospective checks showed that each incident had been managed well. The oversight in reporting occurred when the Registered Manager was absent. The reporting protocol was reviewed to prevent similar mistakes being made.

The home manages health and safety in relation to the premises well. Certification is held centrally to show servicing and maintenance of the electrical and gas installations. The fire risk assessment for the premises is reviewed annually. Practise fire drills are carried out and young people are clear about the evacuation procedures.

Personnel information demonstrates that a suitable recruitment procedure is followed. A suitable level of information is held in-house. Young people are looked after by staff who do not start work ahead of being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check. The records maintained on staff interviews, the process followed when verifying references, and the exact starting date are not always clear. There is good vetting of visitors to the home with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

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 good.

The staff and management team maintained good standards between inspections. This was not without some challenges. Alternative placements had been needed to support the full range of needs and presenting behaviours of some residents. Staff worked well within a multidisciplinary framework to secure different placements. Existing residents experience stable lifestyles as they prepare for future independence. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations.

Staff have written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides good information in accordance with regulations. Aims and objectives as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Records are easy to access. Staff use guidance to ensure a consistent response to meeting residents' presenting needs. There is excellent communication with residents and it is clear that young people are gaining positive experiences to fulfil their potential.

Ofsted recently received an application to register a new manager. The proposed manager holds some of the relevant qualifications needed for the role. A management course is being accessed. A key representative from the responsible organisation has good child care experience as a child protection social worker. A hands on approach provides suitable management support.

Deployment of staff is good. There are no staff vacancies. The staffing structure had not experienced too many changes between inspections. There had been some promotional opportunities. There is continuity of practice across the different teams. Each shift has a recognised shift leader. Rotas demonstrate that staffing levels are being maintained. Staff are clear about their roles and balance their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people are met and the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken.

Records show a suitable clarity in how staff are being managed. There is access to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training (or equivalent) at levels 3 and 4 in care and management. These are recognised qualifications to work and manage children in a residential setting. There is suitable investment in staffs' training with good training attendance records and certificates being maintained. Management are working to improve the percentage of staff holding National Vocational Qualifications. Staff supervision records are linked to personal development and appraisal. The appraisal process is managed very well. Clear and achievable targets are set that

support staff members development. Supervision, induction and foundation training is provided. Records are not always clear.

Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Monthly visits take place. Reports are being produced but they provide few comments on the discussions that take place during these visits. With limited information it can be difficult to form an opinion on the standards of care provided in the home. A written development plan is still to be produced. This will support the wider quality assurance framework operated at the home. Record checks made by the proposed manager and the regulation 33 visitor had recently led to improved accuracy of information. Shortfalls linked to reporting of notifications was discussed in detail. The management team do reflect on practice and there is improving use of self-evaluation and improvements identified are being managed in a more timely manner.

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
20	notify Ofsted, without delay, of any serious events listed in Schedule 5 in relation to the children's home (Regulation 30(1) and Schedule 5)	31/03/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that when restraint is used young people are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them in the records kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
- ensure full and satisfactory information is available on the recruitment process being followed, in particular, records on interviews, reference verification and the date when staff work their first shift (NMS 27 Schedule 2)
- ensure systems are effective for monitoring the home's operation, in particular, areas for development are being identified, comments from young people, families members and staff are captured and help drive forward an improvement agenda (NMS 32 & 33)
- produce a written development plan for the home (NMS 33.5)
- improve the clarity of management records, in particular, the induction process

being followed and the supervision frequency. (NMS 31 & 28)