

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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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 children's home has been established by the provider to offer a specialised provision for up to six young adolescent males who can present problematic sexualised behaviour related to their early life trauma.

The home offers the young people it looks after an integrated package of therapeutic care, education and outdoor pursuits tailored to meet individual needs from referral to eventual rehabilitation or independence.

The home is set in a large detached property set in its own expansive grounds on the rural outskirts of a town. The home provides a high quality living environment for the young people it accommodates. Five young people are living in the home. They were present during the inspection and several actively contributed to the process.

Summary

This was a full unannounced key inspection. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as satisfactory with many good and one outstanding feature. Young people receive an individualised care package that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to their changing needs and effectively keep them healthy and safe. Young people receive informed help with preparing for independent living. The home is excellently decorated in communal areas and well maintained providing a very homely environment in which young people are enabled to achieve and develop. The acting manager provides good direction and leadership to an enthusiastic, trained staff team while the provider recruits to the Registered Manager post. Staff are clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the care needs of the young people they look after.

Shortfalls are identified in organisational areas related to the inconsistent recording of staff training, confirming how staff are supervised and having access to monitoring reports. Because of these, the quality of the overall service is satisfactory.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered provider was asked to amend the level of detail included on the staff supervision log. This recommendation was met but not in the manner required. An action made by this inspection reiterates the need for an improved level of detail in this formal record. The registered provider was also asked to have the address of the home included within the certificate of insurance. This has been achieved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are being taught self-help skills that they will need to prepare them for independence. They receive coaching and practical help from staff about how to budget, shop,

plan and prepare meals both individually and as a communal activity. Guidance includes advice about healthy eating and the importance of balanced diets. Staff encourage young people to put into practice what they learn.

The health and medical needs of young people are comprehensively assessed prior to and during their placement at the home to ensure that well-being can be maintained. Comprehensive health plans record how relevant guidance, advice and specialist support is being provided. Young people have access to community based health services and consultants to help them with any specific therapeutic, social and health needs alongside their routine preventive optical and dental checks. When young people are unwell they are helped to arrange appointments with local general practitioners. Annual health checks assist the home's preventive approach towards promoting good health.

Training in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid is provided to ensure staff competence to address health related needs. Medicine is stored securely in lockable cabinets and administered diligently. Arrangements for the treatment and consistent recording of accidents occurring within the home are thorough and confidential.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people reside in a homely safe environment. Their privacy is enhanced by the provision of lockable personal space and en suite bathing facilities. Confidentiality is maintained by trained staff who know how and with whom they can share information. All of the home's records are kept secure when not in use.

Effective safeguarding of young people is promoted by policies, procedures and guidance developed by the registered person. These fully comply with regulatory requirements and promote good practice in areas of child protection including countering bullying, effective behaviour management and dealing with young people who absent themselves from the home. Staff are aware of the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, including how to recognise signs of abuse and respond decisively to any allegations about adults or peers. Staff regularly receive statutory and specialist training that informs their practice for looking after young people safely. The home has in place practical systems to notify significant events to relevant authorities including the regulator.

Young people can raise any concerns or complaints they may have about any aspect of the home or their care directly with staff or the manager. Young people have access to a clear responsive complaints procedure outlined in their guide to the home. They also have unrestricted access to services provided by independent advocates confirming that their views can be heard. The home takes complaints from young people very seriously and deals with all levels of concern, from whatever source, quickly and effectively.

Staff base their management of young people's behaviour on the active encouragement of acceptable behaviour both within the home and the wider community. Staff provide young people with explicit behavioural boundaries that are fair, consistent and easily understood. In this way young people can understand what is reasonably being expected from them and the rationale for the expectation. The relatively low level of recorded incidents confirms that that young people are helpfully encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour while being prevented from hurting themselves or others. Where some young people may have

particular difficulties with their impulses these issues are specifically addressed by the care staff and qualified therapists.

The registered provider ensures that young people, staff and visitors are kept safe from the risk posed by fire and other hazards. Records are maintained to confirm that regular preventative drills are conducted ensuring that everyone knows what to do in an emergency. The overall health and safety of everyone using the home is promoted by an ongoing review of risk assessments for all potential environmental and activity related hazards.

The vetting of staff and visitors to the home is thorough. Young people's safety is protected because staff are not employed to work within the home until all necessary checks and references confirm them as being suitable. Personnel files do not however fully confirm the inclusion of proof of individual identification as required by Schedule 2. All newly appointed staff undergo a comprehensive induction process that informs and prepares them for safely working with young people. Visitors to the home are not permitted unsupervised access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding and awareness of each young person's particular needs and the reason they are placed with this provision. The care provided for young people includes ongoing access to qualified therapeutic counselling to address and understand underlying behavioural issues.

This home predominantly accommodates older teenagers progressing through the therapeutic placement. Within its care remit the home has successfully developed experience supporting, encouraging and training young people in preparation for independence or moving to family or other supportive younger adult settings. Most resident young people demonstrate a good level of functional maturity empowering their unsupervised integration into local community activities. Continual assessments of young people's ability and behaviour monitoring effectively informs any necessary adaptations to individual placement or pathway plans. Assessments include judgements about safely integrating individual young people into the community, educational and employment placements.

The registered provider proactively promotes the value of education and ensures that all young people receive meaningful learning and development opportunities that reflect their age and abilities. These vary considerably as some young people are above school leaving age and are being prepared to access further education college places or employment. Young people below the school leaving age receive excellent learning opportunities through the provider's own registered school where bespoke packages of learning enhance enjoyment and achieving. Young people's files comprehensively evidence their learning and achievement and what steps the provider will take to meet these needs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people confirm by their compliant behaviour that they enjoy positive relationships with the staff team looking after them. The home promotes sociable behaviour, manners and mutual respect. Young people are routinely encouraged to make meaningful contributions by helping to keep their home presentable by practicing their self-help skills with tasks like keeping their

rooms tidy, helping with meal preparation and in some cases doing their own laundry. Engaging with productive activities enhances relationships with staff and instils in young people some pride in their home.

Young people are well supported in their preparation for eventual independence. Individual placement plans have been continually developed using Every Child Matters outcome areas, to identify how individual care packages will be delivered and what further assistance staff can provide. Case files contain a comprehensive range of information supporting how care is provided and evaluated. A looked after children's format provides the principal baseline for the home's documentation. Case records confirm that the care provided is always subject to a statutory review within prescribed timescales and that throughout their care placement young people have practical opportunities to comment upon the care being provided to them. Outcomes are well recorded.

The registered provider has both formal and informal systems for consulting with young people. Young people have a mechanism for commenting upon the running of the home that includes how day-to-day care is delivered and received. Young people have informal access to at least four members of staff at all times when they are in the home. Staffing levels are geared to providing maximum personalised support. Individual key work sessions are used to consider and record with individual young people the perceived effectiveness of their care plans. In-house community meetings are attended and used by young people to debate areas of concern and possible improvements to the running of their home; however the potential of this forum is depleted by being irregularly held and inconsistently reviewed by participants.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with practical help and good informed advice for making the transition towards independence. They are encouraged to develop their capacity to self-help and to improve practical social skills such as the importance of good hygiene, how to budget with personal allowances, how to shop and to look after their own belongings and clothes. The importance of independence skill development is recognised by being often linked to accreditation schemes. Pathway plans record how young people are helped to prepare for their future and from whom they will receive support. Young people are able to discuss their future moves confidently.

The home provides all young people with sufficient allowances for clothing and pocket money. Personal items, clothing and all monies are accurately accounted for on individual case files. Young people are taught to look after their cash, belongings and clothes and practice these skills.

The location of the home in which the young people live is complementary to its purpose. It has access to all local services whilst being rurally located and private. The home has its own regularly maintained transport. The children's home provides a high quality physical environment that confirms that large homes can be individualised and made homely. The property is very well presented throughout, with superior calibre furnishings, fixtures and fittings. It is kept exceedingly clean and is undamaged and tidy in all communal and most private areas confirming the majority of the young peoples appreciation of their surroundings.

Environmental shortfalls in one personal area, indicates that a review of the room's layout and present construction is required to reduce recurring damage and need for regular maintenance.

There is evidence of thought being given to the safe use of the building as demonstrated by the strategic location of offices, conference and therapy rooms, recreation room, chill out areas and the careful positioning of staff sleep-in rooms to promote night time safety and security for all staff and young people.

Over the last year the home has incorporated a self-contained 'training flat' for the development of independence skills and separate living for young people preparing for independence. This area practically bolsters the registered provider's positive stance in supporting effective pathway planning.

The home is exceptionally well equipped with numerous toilets and bathrooms. All first floor bedrooms are equipped with lockable en-suite toilets, bath and shower facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The updated Statement of Purpose for the home includes all information required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations 2001 confirming how the home is operated and what services it provides. The newly revised, user friendly, young person's guide provides an accurate review what young people can expect from the home and what complementary services they can access for help and advice. The registered providers policies and procedures make available to staff comprehensive guidance about the high expectations it has for looking after vulnerable young people.

The staffing rota confirms that the home is staffed according to the levels identified by the Statement of Purpose and that this complement is sufficient to safely attend to the individual care needs of young people. Effective contingency arrangements are in place that minimise the likelihood of staffing shortfalls disrupting the care and support being provided.

Young people are very well supported by a stable, experienced, qualified and committed group of staff who with the assistance of trained therapists ensure emotional and developmental needs are addressed. All staff receive induction and statutory training. The currency and effectiveness of this provision is compromised by shortfalls in the communication and recording of when staff have attended requisite courses.

There have been two changes to the homes management since the last inspection. Currently the home is overseen by its deputy as the acting manager during an interim recruitment phase. The acting manager is appropriately qualified and competently supports the staff team to ensure that the care given to young people is of a consistent high quality that promotes positive outcomes. Management changes have highlighted some staff supervisory shortfalls which could compromise the quality of the care being provided to young people.

The registered provider has a clear organisational process in place to regularly monitor and audit the quality of care being provided thereby promoting consistency. The production of monthly monitoring reports informs the process of service evaluation and incorporates useful feedback from young people. Some shortfalls with the distribution of these reports in hard copy undermine their practical value as a monitoring tool. The home's annual development

plan identifies both attained and proposed goals for service improvement over the next twelve months.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people living at the children's home receive an individualised package of care fitting to their age and ability, vulnerability and potential risk. All staff display a good knowledge of the young people they are working with, including their cultural background, which helps ensure that holistic needs are being addressed as far as is possible. The home has developed explicit policies and procedures promoting equality diversity in all aspects of their service for children from differing backgrounds, abilities and cultures. The home is accessible to people with mobility difficulties.

Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and arranged in a manner that makes them readily usable by staff. They effectively demonstrate that the provider places emphasis on quality recording and evaluating meaningful information. Specific records such as placement plans, pathway plans and health plans effectively confirm how positive outcomes are identified and achieved. Young people are encouraged to access and contribute their thoughts and comments to their individual case records.

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
28	ensure that the staff supervision recording log be amended to clearly indicate the staff position (i.e. probationary or experienced) and the frequency and duration of each session (Regulation 27(4)(a))	8 October 2010
31	ensure that all staff have access to training outlined in Appendix 2 of the National Minimum Standards and that their attendance can be confirmed by an up-to-date record (Regulation 27(4)(a))	8 October 2010
33	ensure that the record of the systems to monitor the performance of the home are signed off by the manager with a copy being retained within the children's home. (Regulation 34)	8 October 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that personnel files include evidence that all the requirements of Schedule 2 have been met including details confirming an individuals identity (NMS 27.1)
- improve the frequency and dispersal of minutes from the young people's community meetings (NMS 8.4)

- ensure that all areas of the interior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair by reviewing the construction of the personal accommodation for young people with particular learning needs. (NMS 24.3)