

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Barbara Davies
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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 accommodates up to five young people between the ages of 10 and 17. The home is owned and managed by a local authority. Features include a garden which backs on to woodland, an activities room, a lounge with an open fire place and single bedrooms. There are office spaces and a separate kitchen and dining area on the ground floor as well as a laundry room.

At the time of the inspection, there were four young people living in the home. Four young people were at home during the inspection, two of whom were spoken with.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an announced interim inspection that looked at all of the key national minimum standards in staying safe. The home provides a safe and comfortable environment for young people and the standard of care is good.

This inspection found that permanent staff are trained in how to manage challenging behaviour and their consistent application of the county's procedures results in relatively few sanctions and physical restraints. Staff work hard to maintain the stability of placement for young people. Most young people are discharged in accordance with their plans. Occasional placements are disrupted early, as a result of the level of risk becoming unmanageable.

As at the previous inspection, young people are supported and encouraged to actively engage in education and are rewarded for their efforts which results in young people maintaining educational placements. Young people are also supported to take part in a variety of leisure activities.

The home's child protection guidance had not been subject to recent review and it is unclear as to whether staff are now following the correct reporting procedures. Some young people have been admitted to the home who currently fall outside the home's current registration. A current dependency on agency staff means that not all staff working on shift are fully trained in the home's protocols and this can leave permanent staff feeling unsupported in some situations, such as when using physical restraint.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the previous inspection, arrangements have been made to better promote the health and safety of young people. Improved recording procedures now include the

dose of medication administered, making it easier to identify whether young people are receiving the correct treatment. The introduction of regular fire drills, including some at night, familiarises young people with the procedure to follow in the event of a fire.

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.

Storage of confidential information is secure and prevents unauthorised access. Staff are aware of the parties with whom information may and may not be shared. Staff know about and implement safe working practices in their work with children. Unobtrusive supervision promotes the privacy of young people. Although some choose not to do so, young people have the ability to lock their bedroom door and hold responsibility for their own key. These arrangements promote independence and responsibility while not preventing staff from entering in an emergency. Young people are empowered to have some control over who enters their bedroom as well as allowing them to keep their possessions safe.

The home's internal guidance to staff on child protection has not been updated since 2003 and is therefore not consistent with the local authority's safeguarding procedures. While staff do have internet access to a copy of the local authority safeguarding procedures, they are not overly familiar with these or clear about the contact details for referrals. There is no evidence that this shortfall has had an adverse impact on outcomes for young people to date as strategy meetings have been convened as a result of making referrals to social workers.

No bullying is currently reported in the home and the home is reported as being more settled since some young people have been discharged. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying to occur and records show prompt intervention to eliminate the risks involved and help young people resolve their differences through the use of restorative justice.

Prompt notification is made to the police when young people are absent without permission, allowing early searches to be conducted to try and locate them. Staff independently conduct searches of known addresses and to try and find young people and persuade them to return. Concerns about activities that young people may be involved in while absent from the home, such as prostitution, are in the first instance referred to placing social workers as opposed to directly to the local authority safeguarding team. Potentially, this could delay or prevent further measures being discussed, identified and implemented to protect children.

Staff successfully implement the home's behaviour management techniques and overall the number of restraints and sanctions are low. Far more incidents occur and are successfully diffused by staff without the need for physical intervention. Records are kept of restraints, sanctions and incidents. Effective monitoring of these means that any patterns can be considered in relation to the continuing suitability of placement. A current dependency on agency staff means that not all staff working on shift are fully trained in the home's behaviour management and restraint techniques and are, therefore unable to be involved in physically restraining a young person. This can leave permanent staff feeling unsupported and at risk.

Robust systems are in place to ensure the health and safety of children and staff. Staff ensure that all fire, electrical and mechanical equipment is serviced regularly and maintained in good working order. They complete routine checks at regular intervals and maintain appropriate records to demonstrate this. Regular fire drills ensure staff and children are familiar with evacuation procedures. Risk assessments completed, in all aspects of their care, show the action taken to minimise any identified risks.

The recruitment procedures for permanent staff were not inspected for compliance on this occasion. Following an audit of checks during the previous key inspection of the home, in July 2010, it was reported that a 'there are robust recruitment policies and procedures in place to ensure the protection of young people'.

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.

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
17	prepare and implement a written policy which is intended to safeguard children in the home from abuse and neglect and sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect; ensure the home's policies are consistent with the safeguarding procedures of the local authority and provide clarity for staff in terms of contact details (Regulation 16 (1) (a) and (b))	30/05/2011
1	compile in relation to the children's home a written statement which shall consist of a statement as to the matters listed in schedule 1; this refers to ensuring the Statement of Purpose provides an accurate description of the services provided, particularly in relation to the age range of children accommodated. (Regulation 4 (1) ;Schedule 1 (8)(a))	30/05/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff of the home are aware of, trained in and follow in practice the registered person's restraint policy; in particular this refers to the provision of formal training in physical restraint for agency staff who work regularly in the home. (NMS 22.8)