

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 a three-storey period house in a small town near the coast, and provides individual care and assessment for one young person and her baby. It is not easily accessible to young people, staff or visitors with restricted mobility or visual impairments.

The bedrooms for young people are on the first floor, and the staff office is on the second floor, the latter reached by very steep steps. Young people and staff share a bathroom and toilet.

There is a kitchen and lounge space for dining and relaxing. The home has a very small garden at the front and back. Sports and leisure facilities can be accessed by car, and there are many local places of interest to visit.

Education is provided either locally or at the company's own school, situated at another children's home, approximately half an hour's drive away, or at local colleges.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced interim inspection covering all the key standards in the staying safe outcome group and assessing the implementation of the one action and six recommendations arising from the previous inspection.

This home is currently providing a specific placement for one young person and her baby. A parenting assessment is being undertaken by an independent social worker.

Four of the six recommendations are now fully implemented and the action regarding placement plans and placement agreements is met in one case. However, as the home is providing accommodation to a mother and baby, not all of the required information and agreement is currently held in relation to the baby's placement. An action has not been made as the manager is now addressing this.

The day-to-day care of the young people is good, however, the staff and manager recognise that this is an area of work they have not undertaken previously and are very aware of the need to provide a high level of supervision and surveillance. They are working hard to support the young person and baby whilst contributing to the assessment being carried out by the independent social worker.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection one action and six recommendations were made. The home has made a number of improvements in order to meet these.

One young person's case file now holds all of the information required including an agreement for the placement and a placement plan which is detailed and comprehensive. Therefore, this action is now met. However, the home does not hold the same, separate, information on a second child, who is a baby and the child of the other young person. The information on the baby is currently stored on the young person's file.

The records of the administration of medicines are accurately maintained and fully accord with the stock of medicines held. The records are monitored regularly and stocks checked to ensure accuracy.

Staff are now familiar with local safeguarding children board procedures. These are available to all staff on a computer and have been marked as a favourite, enabling rapid access to them. This recommendation is now met.

The home is now well decorated throughout and maintained to a good standard. The maintenance programme is ongoing and the standard of the accommodation continues to improve. Young people's bedrooms are well furnished and each has sufficient space to store clothes and personal items.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's prescribed and non-prescribed medicines are stored securely in a locked metal safe in a secure room. All prescribed medicines administered are recorded well, signed for by the person issuing the medication and a witness. Some non prescribed medicines also have double signatures. The records are monitored regularly by the manager. Any medicines that are refused are recorded clearly and a referral is made to the prescribing practitioner. The stocks of medicine held accord with the record, and the recommendation made at the last inspection regarding the accuracy of recording is now met. All other standards in this outcome group were previously assessed as good and the overall judgement remains unchanged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff continue to promote the privacy and confidentiality of young people by ensuring that all confidential information is held securely and all staff are aware of the policy on information-sharing and observe the practice guidelines. Some staff say this has become more difficult since they are required to undertake some paperwork in public areas of the house in order to provide suitable levels of supervision to young people.

Young people say they are able to be private when in their bedroom and using bathrooms. Young people are able to use a telephone in private if they wish to.

The policy and procedure for making complaints is unchanged since the last inspection. Complaints records are audited regularly by the manager and a visiting manager, however, no complaints have been received since the present placements commenced.

All staff receive regular training updates in safeguarding awareness in addition to the training provided during their induction. This is an experienced staff team who are very aware of safeguarding procedures. Contact details of the local authority designated officers (LADOs) and safeguarding team are held in the staff office. The Local Safeguarding Children Board is available to staff on the computer and the link is set as a favourite allowing all staff rapid access to them. The recommendation arising from the previous inspection is now met.

Staff receive training in bullying awareness, and the company has an effective policy for managing incidents of bullying. However, this home provides a specific single placement for a mother and baby and, whilst staff vigilance is high, bullying is not currently an issue in this home. Staff regularly discuss how young people can keep themselves safe and each young person has an individual risk assessment. If a young person is absent from the home there are clear policies and procedures in place to promote their safety. All young people are given the opportunity to discuss the reasons for any absence on their return to the home. There is one recorded absence since the last inspection, none since the present placement started.

The system for ensuring that all required notifications of significant incidents are reported to the appropriate agencies is unchanged. Staff are aware of the need to notify senior staff and other agencies of serious incidents; no notifications have been made since the present placement started. A list of events requiring notification is available to all staff for their information.

The company continues to use a behaviour management system based on reward and incentives. Young people are able to negotiate rewards and sanctions; however, there is no need to use this model during the course of the present placement. Each young person has a positive handling plan, which details triggers, risks and suggested strategies for managing behaviour. No sanctions or physical interventions have been necessary during the present placement. Despite the lack of use of restraint and sanctions the records are monitored regularly by the manager and visiting manager.

Young people's safety is protected by the extensive use of risk assessments for the premises, equipment and activities. The home has an emergency plan and an up-to-date fire safety risk assessment. All risk assessments have been updated recently since the start of the present placement. All fire safety equipment is tested regularly and a fire safety certificate issued this year by external fire safety consultants. Fire safety records are well maintained and fire tests with evacuations take place at monthly intervals. These exceed the requirement for fire drills.

There are robust systems in place to ensure the safe recruitment of staff. Staff recruitment files have been examined previously at the company head office and were found to be good. No files were checked on this occasion.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's placement plans and placement agreement are detailed and hold all of the information that staff need in order to be able to meet the needs of young people on a day-to-day basis. At the previous inspection new placement agreements and placement plans were not put in place following a change of placement. This is now fully in place for one young person placed. However, not all children have placement plans or placement agreements in place. Despite this staff are very aware of the young people's needs and are working hard to meet them. Staff support contact between young people and their families; all contact arrangements are known to staff and accord with the plans of the placing authority.

Young people continue to participate in planning for their future lives and are invited to attend their placement reviews. However, as a result of a move of placement within the company's group of homes, whilst a review date has been set, the frequency of reviews has not been maintained within statutory timescales. When this has occurred, this has not been pursued on the behalf of the young person by the staff or manager. Young people say they are consulted on a daily basis about their views and wishes regarding the day-to-day running of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported in gaining greater independence and developing the skills required to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. However, not all young people have pathway plans or leaving care plans in place, thereby, ensuring that they have a network of support in place when they leave the home.

The home is very comfortably furnished and well decorated throughout and is generally well maintained. It is well suited to meet the needs of young people. Young people are encouraged to choose their own colour schemes and to personalise the home throughout. The home has many personal features to the décor, such as, personal family photographs, ornaments, banners and greeting cards. Young

people's bedrooms are decorated attractively and personalised with good quality furniture and bedding. The home provides a highly-individualised domestic family style environment. The maintenance programme is continuing, the manager says a small utility area at the rear of the home is next to be refurbished. Two previous recommendations are now met. However, the bathroom and toilet are not fitted with locks that enable them to be opened by staff in an emergency and this recommendation is repeated.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people's case files are well structured and maintained and now hold all of the information required. However, as one of the two young people accommodated at the home is a baby the home has not opened a separate case file for each young person. The manager has agreed to do this for each young person living in the home. All other standards in this outcome group were previously judged as good and were not inspected on this occasion.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the registered person contacts the placing authority to request emergency or statutory reviews of placement plans when these are due, if the placing authority has not arranged the review (NMS 3.3)
- ensure that bathrooms and toilets are fitted with suitable locks ensuring that staff are able to open doors in an emergency. (NMS 25.6)
- ensure that there is a comprehensive plan for the young person preparing to leave care which specifies the support and assistance they will need to enable a successful transition into adulthood, and which is consistent with the Pathway Plan and any transition plan. (NMS 6.1)