

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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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 provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged between 10 and 16 years and is owned by a private company.

The home is a detached property situated in a rural area on the outskirts of a village. Each young person has their own bedroom, and a number of communal areas are provided for recreational activities. Separate facilities are provided for staff, together with office space.

The ground floor comprises a lounge, kitchen diner, utility room and office. The first floor has bedrooms, a bathroom and games room. There is a garden to the rear of the property and parking. Three young people currently live in the home of which none were present during the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced interim inspection looked at the outcomes for staying safe and the regulatory outcomes associated with a complaint received by Ofsted. This was in relation to behaviour management and fire prevention equipment at the home. This inspection also looked at the progress the setting has made with the recommendations made at the last inspection. These were in relation to documentation and the administering and storage of controlled medication. There is some evidence of improvement in these areas. However, there are still shortfalls in relation to some documentation.

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered person was asked to: improve the written procedures for young people who are absent from the home; review the recording of room searches; devise a staffing policy and purchase a new medication storage unit and written record. This has been purchased and ensures that clear records and safe storage are now provided for different medication. A staffing policy has been devised and the procedures for absence have improved. The record of room searches requires further detail.

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.

There is a good procedure for making complaints at the home and these are addressed and investigated by the senior management team. Young people know how to make complaints and are supported well by staff to do so when they have concerns about the service. There has been one external complaint made to Ofsted since the last inspection, which has been addressed at this inspection. This related to fire prevention equipment being misused and behaviour management. The manager had highlighted the need for all staff and young people to be extra vigilant in order to protect young people from the risk of a fire at the home. This follows a period where there have been behavioural incidents resulting in the risk of fire and misuse of fire equipment. Risk assessments have been implemented in response to young people's behaviour and staff have made several changes to practice to reduce these risks. For example, fire extinguishers are presently stored in the office away from the young people and they are checked regularly and certified as ready for use. The toaster has been moved to the office for supervised use only and lighters are not allowed. These measures will be reviewed in consideration with placements. Fire drills, detailing all young people and staff are conducted regularly at different times of the day and evening. These are evaluated according to response times and participation. In addition, the alarms and emergency lighting are checked every week. Following recent incidents the home has sourced fire educators to come into the home and make young people more aware of the dangers of fire.

Young people's privacy and dignity is respected well at the home. Keys are issued to all bedrooms, although these stay at the home when young people attend their education provision. The bathrooms are shared by young people who have agreed morning routines. This ensures that young people use the bathroom facilities at a certain time in the morning and this helps them with self-discipline and time management. The staff have an agreement with young people regarding cleaning and enter their rooms to tidy and clean. The home has recently undergone a very difficult period of time. This has resulted in several incidents including a young person taking their own personal records from the office. Due to other items in the home also going astray the staff have conducted room searches. The staff have recorded these, although the records lack details of young people's views and comments about the necessitated search.

There are few instances of bullying at the home. There are procedures for bullying and staff are quick to implement these strategies if required. Staff address carefully any issues on an individual basis and ensure that young people feel safe and supported at the home. Young people are of similar ages and cooperate together

well in the home. However, this has also led to instances of unacceptable behaviour where young people have worked together to behave in ways that jeopardise their personal safety. Staff have taken a consistent approach in order to promote the home's rules and boundaries but these have been challenged repeatedly. This has led to staff making some areas of the home inaccessible at certain times of the day. Parts of the home have been damaged, however, repairs are made quickly and damaged areas made safe in the mean time. Staff are careful to look at prevention of behavioural issues and analyse their practice when incidents occur. This reflective approach ensures senior staff question any intervention and look for ways of supporting young people that best suit individual situations. Staff also facilitate house meetings for young people to generate discussion and open communication about current house issues. Staff very rarely use physical intervention and instead use positive reinforcement and incentives. There is one incident of physical intervention since the last inspection which has been recorded but lacks any input or comment from the young person involved.

Staff have worked hard with young people to help them understand that leaving the home without permission and prior planning can lead to unsafe situations. This preventative work is effective and there are now few instances of young people missing from the home. The staff have helped young people take responsibility for their personal safety by providing clear boundaries and ensuring that young people are settled at the home. In the event of any young person going missing from the home, agreed protocols are followed and relevant authorities notified. This helps keep young people safe. The home also has a clear procedure for safeguarding young people. Staff work well with outside agencies and ensure planned procedures are followed systematically in the event of any allegations. Clear records show how these are investigated and prioritised by the home. This demonstrates that the service has good systems to protect young people from potential harm or abuse. All staff receive training in child protection during their induction period to ensure that they can implement the home's child protection policy in practice.

The building is safe and secure, staff always request identification from visitors and monitor their whereabouts carefully. There are reminders on the back of external doors for staff to ensure that the identity of any visitor or agency staff is checked carefully before the door is opened. Appliances are checked within the required timescales and certified as safe. The home has a rigorous recruitment and selection process in place. Criminal Record Bureau checks are carried out on all prospective staff. Previous employment and subsequent gaps are all covered on the application form and followed up during interview. This ensures that staff recruited are suitable and any previous issues are highlighted. Agency staff all have a profile at the home and are expected to bring valid documentation to any shifts they cover. This ensures that young people benefit from being cared for by safe, suitable staff.

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?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all sections of the form used for room searches are completed (NMS 9.8)
- ensure that when measures of restraint are used, children are encouraged to have their views recorded and sign their names against the records. (NMS 22.14)