

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 large detached house, with four bedrooms, located on the outskirts of a rural village. The home is able to accommodate three male or female young people ranging in age from 10 to 16 years. Although rurally situated, the home is close to a large town and is located only 30 miles from a major city centre.

All young people have single bedrooms, there is separate sleeping accommodation for staff on duty at night and there are adequate bathroom and toilet facilities. Communal facilities include a kitchen/dining room, lounge and utility room on the ground floor and 'the den' on the first floor, which is used for craft work, homework and for young people needing individual time. The den is sometimes used for education if young people are out of school and for any therapeutic work undertaken with young people by the provider organisation's therapy team.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection. All key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcomes were assessed.

Currently, the Registered Manager is on secondment but interim management arrangements are sound and do not impact on the running of the home. The Registered Manager continues to have contact with the home during her period of absence.

There are some matters identified through actions and recommendations as a result of this inspection. These do not directly effect the standards of care provided and there is a great emphasis on ensuring young people's needs are met. Staff create a very natural 'homely' and 'supporting' environment where young people can be themselves. In turn, this enables young people to engage with staff and accept boundaries even during the most challenging times. One young person describes their experience of this home as 'the best'. Another young person says that their experience of living at this home has helped their behaviour.

Three young people were living in the home and two volunteered their time to participate in the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the registered provider was asked to ensure that the upkeep of the premises is maintained, and that repairs are undertaken within reasonable timescales. There are still obvious signs of structural damage and work required to improve parts of the home. However, documented evidence shows that current matters are being addressed with timescales in place for work to be done.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are involved in devising weekly menus. This ensures that their preferences and choices are taken into account. Meals are freshly prepared and where possible, young people are involved in meal preparation. For example, young people are encouraged to prepare light snacks which provides an opportunity for them to learn new skills. Menus are indicative of the wholesome and freshly prepared meals young people consume. In addition, they also enjoy a regular 'take away' meal. Young people say they are satisfied with meal provisions and the opportunities to negotiate their preferences. The usable space in the kitchen/diner is ample for staff and young people to prepare and enjoy meals together. Standards of hygiene and food safety arrangements are effective. As a result, the service received an award in recent times for this achievement.

Young people's holistic health needs are thoroughly explored through initial and ongoing assessments. Records such as healthcare plans are comprehensive with supporting documents for monitoring outcomes of young people's health related appointments. Young people access a range of health provisions. These include health assessments, primary healthcare treatments and when appropriate, more specialist services mainly via the children and adolescent mental health service. Staff are sensitive towards young people's backgrounds and current needs. Therefore topics such as sexual health, substance misuse and promoting healthier lifestyles are approached at a pace which is appropriate to individual needs.

Staff undertake training to ensure the safe receipt, storage and administration of medication. Procedures are also in place for obtaining the relevant consents to administer medications, first aid and arrangements for young people to receive emergency medical treatments. The home's procedural guidance refers to the use of a controlled drugs register and a dedicated lockable receptacle for the storage of controlled drugs. No controlled drugs are currently prescribed, however, these provisions are not in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people say that their privacy is respected and in no way compromised. All young people are given keys to their bedrooms which also encourages them to behave responsibly to their private space and that of others. A policy on room searches is in place. This is made known to young people and only used if there are concerns relating to safety and protection. Room searches are rare and outcomes are documented although the most recent form isn't fully completed to demonstrate transparency when this activity was undertaken. The thoroughness of the initial assessment process considers any restrictions on communication during any time of a young person's placement. Agreed restrictions are recorded and monitored by staff, taking into account a young person's safety and emotional well-being.

A well-established complaints procedure is in place. These details are included in key documents such as the children's guide, although contact details for the current regulator (Ofsted) and the Children's Rights Director are incorrect. Young people say they are confident in talking to any member of staff if they are unhappy or concerned. Prompt action is taken in response to complaints and outcomes are fully recorded. Staff create an 'open' and 'listening' culture in the home, which enables young people to voice their opinions and views without fear or prejudice.

The deployment and quality of staff, contributes to young people's safety and protection. Young people say they feel safe at this home and one of the reasons being their relationships with staff. Staff attend a range of safeguarding training and development courses to heighten their awareness of safeguarding and protection. In addition, staff work well with external professionals and agencies to maximise and promote young people's safety. Considerable work is undertaken with young people to help them identify with their past and present. This helps young people become more aware and cautious of keeping safe both during and after their placements at this home.

Young people do not identify bullying as an issue in this home. Young people describe some of their behaviours as 'banter' but nothing serious. Staff encourage appropriate interactions and relationship building between young people and their peers. This is often achieved through one-to-one and group meetings. Supporting literature on anti bullying is vividly displayed for young people to refer to. Young people are knowledgeable about the different types of bullying including 'cyber' bullying and how this impacts on their safety.

Staff work hard to keep young people safe from external influences. In particular, preventative work is done to discourage young people being absent from the home without authority. All incidents are taken seriously including prompt liaison with placing authorities and other agencies such as the local police. Although young people are de briefed on their return, the process is undertaken by staff and not if possible, by the young person's social worker or a person independent of the home.

Notifications of significant events are submitted to Ofsted as determined under the relevant regulations. The majority of issues reported in recent times are no longer occurring since one young person moved on.

Behavioural management strategies are identified with and on behalf of young people during initial assessments and care planning processes. Young people can relate to the types of support they receive to help them understand more about acceptable behaviours. One young person said, 'My behaviours have improved since living at this home'. The combination of individual needs is on occasions, challenging and complex. However, the staff team are strong and united. Staff focus on positive incentives and instil clear boundaries with young people. These examples are indicative of the environment established to nurture and value young people as individuals regardless of the challenging attitudes often presented. Young people respect and benefit from this and are making good progress as a result. Sanctions are imposed to help young people reflect and take responsibility for their behaviours. Staff report that physical restraint is used as a last resort and all staff are trained regularly to apply the registered provider's preferred method of physical intervention if required.

A range of health and safety checks are carried out for ensuring the safety of young people, staff and visitors. These includes checks undertaken by approved contractors and staff. Fire safety procedures are in place including regular fire drills. Young people are aware of these procedures and fire drills are held at various times of the day and night.

Robust systems are in place for the selection and vetting of prospective staff. In doing so, written outcomes of interviews are retained, references are verified and a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau check is obtained prior to staff commencing employment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from an established key worker system and other forms of support. Outcomes of key worker meetings are recorded and contribute to identifying key areas of support and input where needed. Young people are confident that they are treated fairly by all staff and that all staff are approachable. This means that young people do not only approach 'named' members of staff should they wish to discuss matters. Person's independent to the home are arranged to befriend or consult with young people in accordance with their choices. A therapy team is accessible to staff and young people via the registered provider. This strengthens provisions for meeting young people's holistic needs.

Young people attend the registered provider's education provision. Staff are proactive in supporting young people's education attainment and outcomes. This

includes transporting young people to and from school, close liaison with education staff and contributions towards young people's education reviews. In-house facilities include a dedicated room with a computer for study purposes. In addition, young people can have a desk in their bedrooms for study. Opportunities are accessible to young people for vocational studies and work experience. These opportunities take into account young people's preferences and widen potential career prospects for when they move on.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are familiar with their care and placement plans and where appropriate, are involved in decision-making processes. The varying components which make up care and placement plans are of a good standard and consistent with young people's day-to-day activities and planned objectives. Young people's care plans are accessible and this ensures that staff are consistent in their support to young people.

Effective procedures are in place for reviewing young people's placements and progress including timescales and input from the staff. Young people are involved in these processes and are encouraged to contribute to their statutory reviews. Young people's views are acted upon and where appropriate, action is taken by the home's management to support these views including placement suitability.

Staff are good at following through contact arrangements as determined through initial assessments. Young people are supported sensitively and consistently for ensuring that contact with families and significant others are positive experiences. Where appropriate, staff facilitate transport arrangements for young people visiting family and significant others. Records relating to young people's contact with professionals and families are kept up to date.

Comprehensive systems are in place for assessing the suitability of young people referred for a placement at the home. These procedures take into account the existing needs of the existing group of young people. Decisions taken in recent times to avoid emergency admissions have had a positive impact on the young people on long-term placements. Young people say that they prefer minimal change to placements. Young people are encouraged to form friendships with new residents and this is done at a pace in which they feel comfortable. Discharge procedures are managed carefully and sensitively. Young people moving on are supported and prepared for semi or independent living. In addition, staff are vigilant of young people's emotional well-being and guidance they may need to re-establish or form new relationships once they have moved on.

Diverse approaches are in place for consulting with young people. Young people prefer less formal approaches and often consult with staff on a daily basis other than in formal meetings. However, house meetings are held weekly and young people are

encouraged to contribute their ideas for the agenda and attend these meetings. Records show that a wide range of topics are discussed and explored with young people in house meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are proactive in instigating and consulting with social work professionals regarding pathway planning arrangements. Young people are involved in pathway planning processes. However, staff are also keen to include young people in aspects of daily living tasks ahead of formal pathway planning. Young people say that they are engaged in a range of activities including cooking, cleaning their bedrooms, ironing and personal shopping. Facilities in the home are domestic in style and appear to be adequate for enabling young people to learn and acquire the skills in preparation for moving on to young adulthood.

The original features of the home are domestic in style but constant damage to certain areas requires ongoing repair work. In contrast, there are areas of the home which are well presented such as the kitchen and dining area. Currently, there are obvious areas of the home requiring updating and repairs including floor covering, broken windows and doors. Action is being taken to address this. Progress is being made in undertaking repair work within reasonable timescales and this is an area which will be followed up again at the next inspection. Young people are accommodated in single bedrooms and staff have the use of separate bedroom, bathroom and toilet facilities. Provisions are in place for young people to make or receive telephone calls in private. In addition, young people have their own mobile phones and confirm that they receive a weekly top-up allowance.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

An up-to-date Statement of Purpose is in place and covers all of the criteria as required. This document is accessible to anyone interested in service provisions and the care and welfare of young people. A children's guide is in place. Young people confirm that they were issued with a copy on admission to the home.

At least 80% of the staff team have achieved the National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. Young people are supported by a competent and dedicated staff team. Staff work well as a team and these strengths are disseminated through the home's management team. There are clear arrangements in place for staff deputising in the absence of the Registered Manager. The deputy manager is suitably experienced and demonstrates sound knowledge about the ethos and running of the home. The Registered Manager is currently on a

fixed-term secondment. Although Ofsted has been informed about this arrangement, the specific details about the person in charge of the home as required by regulation have not been supplied.

The staffing levels are determined in accordance with young people's assessed and ongoing needs, although the minimum numbers of staff on duty at any one time does not fall below two. The Statement of Purpose does make limited reference to staffing arrangements but an actual policy is not in place to specify the details of staffing the home at all times. Young people enjoy spending time with staff and this was one of the highlights of their conversation and observed during the inspection. Young people speak highly of the staff team and it is evident that this is mutual. The deployment of staff takes into account continuity of care and supporting individual needs. For example, staffing levels increase intermittently in response to young people's needs. The majority of the staff team is female, although young people have opportunities to spend time with male staff at the home or at their education placement.

All staff are given opportunities to develop and progress. This includes opportunities for promotion and undertaking extra responsibilities within the organisation. A structured training programme is in place and accessible to all staff. This programme covers a wide range of core and service-led training initiatives. In addition, all new staff undergo a well-managed induction programme which includes external guidance frameworks in support of reflective practice during the probation period.

Procedures are in place for identifying and planning the operation of the home including outcomes for young people and staff development. The current annual development plan is slightly out of date. A formal review of this plan and an evaluation of the monitoring of records as required under Schedule 6 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 hasn't been undertaken. A review is required to identify any changes or confirm the continuation of the home's current operation and resourcing. Staff are continuously reviewing and monitoring outcomes for young people. This is achieved through daily discussions and handovers, discussions with young people and more formally through review processes and staff meetings.

Young people's files are in very good order. The content is compliant; files are accessible and stored confidentially. Procedures are also in place for young people wishing to access information held about them. A range of policies and procedural guidance are in place for maximising the protection of young people's privacy and records which are personal to them.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Great emphasis is placed on valuing young people and they are treated with great respect regardless of their cultural backgrounds, ethnicity reasons for placements. Staff are constantly identifying opportunities for engaging young people in community-based activities. This strengthens young people's scope for making informed choices and establishing their rights as equal citizens. Decisions are made as a result of listening to young people. Staff undertake training on equality and diversity and this supports their professional development for working in a very diverse environment. Daily routines and provisions

such as education, diet and access to hobbies and leisure pursuits are indicative of the options and opportunities to encourage and support positive outcomes for young people.

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
16	update the complaints procedure in the children's guide with the correct contact details for Ofsted and the Children's Rights Director (Regulation 24-(4)(a))	31/12/2010
29	inform Ofsted in writing of the details of the person in charge of the home during the Registered Manager's secondment (Regulation 37 (2)(d)(e))	06/12/2010
33	undertake a formal and written review of the matters set out in Schedule 6 and the annual development plan. (Regulation 34)	24/02/2011

Recommendations

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

- provide a controlled drugs register and a separate lockable receptacle for the storage of controlled drugs in accordance with written medication procedures (NMS 13)
- ensure that all sections of the form used for room searches are completed (NMS 9.8)
- review current policies and practical arrangements for consulting with young people on their return to the home after being absent without authority (NMS 19.4)
- devise a staffing policy, taking into account the criteria as specified under national minimum standard 30. (NMS 30.2)