

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 located within a rural setting and provides placements for up to four young people, of both genders, aged from 10 to 16 years. The property is a large detached bungalow with large gardens suitable for outdoor play and recreation. Communal accommodation includes a large lounge, an education room, dining area and kitchen. All young people have single bedrooms and there are separate sleeping and bathroom facilities for staff.

The home focuses on using outdoor pursuits as a basis for engaging young people, who may have challenging behaviours and corresponding difficulty in settling in more mainstream provision. The aim of the home is to offer short-term (maximum six months) or emergency placements for young people who have complex emotional and behavioural difficulties, and who, according to the Statement of Purpose, 'may need positive interrupters to their current pattern of behaviour'. The Statement of Purpose details that placements of the following type are provided: bridging placements, respite placements, crisis intervention and assessment. The home has an on-site school room which is registered with the Department for Education, providing education for the young people accommodated.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection of this service and all key standards were judged.

Two young were living at the home at the time of the inspection. They say that the home is a good place to live. Many aspects of the service and staff practice are good. Young people's needs are well recorded and identified. Staff are committed to the young people living at the home and work very hard to help young people manage some very challenging behaviours. However there continue to be frequent changes to the management of the home, and this has been identified in previous inspections. Progress is made for short periods but not sustained.

Not all young people are receiving suitable education and, despite the introduction of a new admissions process, some new placements have a detrimental effect on other young people living at the home. Neither of the two recommendations arising from the previous inspection have been implemented.

The overall judgement for this service is satisfactory, although the hard work and commitment shown by the present manager and staff is a notable strength.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection there were two recommendations. The first was to ensure that records relating to complaints fully demonstrate that appropriate procedures have been followed by including action taken and outcome and communicating this with the complainant. The second was to demonstrate that, subsequent to any physical intervention, young people are offered the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner within 24 hours.

Some improvement in the detail contained in the complaints records are noted however not all complaints recorded held the information required therefore the recommendation is repeated.

The records of the use of restraint show that some young people are offered the opportunity to be medically examined following a restraint, in 12 cases the records do not hold that information. The recommendation is not met and is repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy and balanced diet. Staff draw up a list of food preferences at the time a young person is admitted to the home. Staff provide dietary advice and information for young people, and healthy eating posters are displayed in the kitchen. Specialist dietary information is sought from health care professionals when necessary. Young people are consulted about menu planning and assist with the household shopping. Meals are prepared by both young people and staff. The inspector had lunch with the young people, who had helped prepare that meal; it was eaten at the dining table and was a pleasant social occasion. Detailed records are kept of all meals taken by young people and these are regularly monitored to establish any patterns or trends. These show that young people have a wholesome balanced diet, which promotes good health. Young people are encouraged to eat a broad range of meals increasing their awareness of other cultures.

Each young person has a detailed personal health plan which identifies both physical and emotional health needs. Not every young person had consent for medical treatment, however they are of sufficient age and understanding to give their own consent if necessary. Health plans are detailed and regularly updated to reflect any appointments or treatment received. All young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician and receive regular health checks. The manager and staff liaise regularly with a range of health professionals including the looked after children nurse who provides specialist guidance and support to young people and staff. Background health information is sought by staff at the time a young person is admitted to the home.

Young people's medicines are safely stored at the home, there are robust systems in place for administering medicines and all records of administration have double signatures. The stock of medicines held accords with the recorded stock. Any refused medicines are recorded and a referral is made to the prescribing practitioner. Any unused medicines are returned to the pharmacy and a receipt is requested though not always issued by the pharmacy. All staff receive training in the administration of medicines and first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is promoted by staff. All young people have keys to their bedroom and are encouraged to respect each others privacy. There are sound policies and procedures in place which are followed by staff covering the storing and sharing of confidential information. All staff are aware of the need to share information in order to safeguard young people. Young people are able to use the telephone, which is situated in a closed booth, in privacy and they say they are happy with arrangements for using the telephone.

The home has a complaints procedure which is known to young people and staff. These are recorded in a complaints and compliments book. Eleven complaints and three compliments have been recorded since the last inspection. At the last inspection a recommendation was made that the record of complaints fully demonstrated the investigation and outcome and that this was communicated to the complainant. The records still do not contain sufficient detail concerning how the investigation was conducted, and letters to complainants advising them of the outcome are not always held on file. The record of complaints is monitored by the manager and visiting manager.

All staff receive training in safeguarding awareness and this is regularly updated, this promotes the welfare of each young person. Contact details for the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) are displayed in the home. The manager and shift leaders liaise with the local LADO. The temporary manager and deputy show a good level of understanding of the referral process. Staff clearly focus on young people's safety and this is regularly discussed in key-worker meetings and staff meetings: despite this awareness there have been many serious incidents since the last inspection.

Young people say that bullying is not currently an issue in the home, but there are occasionally some incidents. Bullying is addressed in house meetings, key-worker sessions and team meetings. Young people say that staff do their best to reduce the incidents of bullying. The home does take emergency admissions and despite the introduction of risks assessments to minimise the impact of one child's placement on others, these incidents do occur. There are clear procedures in place to promote their safety should a young person be missing from the home. All young people have positive handling plans that identify the level of risk and action to be taken if they are absent. Staff try to dissuade young people from leaving the home and will follow

them if necessary once they have left the building. The home liaises with the local police and all absences are well recorded and monitored by the manager and visiting manager. Young people are given the opportunity to talk with staff, their families or social workers on the return to discuss any reasons for leaving the home.

Any significant incidents requiring notification are made to the appropriate agencies. There are a high number of notifications since the last inspection, including incidents of self harm, assaults on other young people and damage to property. The home has changed its remit recently from a short term activity based centre to long to medium term placements no longer based on an outdoor activity programme.

Young people are supported in developing positive behaviours through the use of a behaviour management programme based upon reward and incentive. Each young person has a positive handling plan which identifies potential behaviours and strategies for helping young people manage their behaviour more effectively. Young people are able to negotiate rewards and targets which help them develop positive behaviours. Young people are aware of the expectations on them and any consequences of not meeting those expectations. Young people say that it does help them manage their behaviour and that any sanctions are fair. Staff receive training in the use of physical intervention. Any use of restraint is recording in a dedicated record. At the last inspection a recommendation was made whenever young people are subjected to a restraint they are offered the opportunity to be examined by a nurse or doctor. Since the last inspection there have been 31 reports of physical restraint of which 12 had no record of whether any such opportunity was offered to the young person. All sanction and restraint records are monitored by managers and visiting managers; despite this these entries are not identified in the monitoring. One monitoring entry did identify that one restraint may have been used to gain compliance.

There are robust health and safety checks in place to promote the safety of young people and staff. There are risks assessments for young people, the premises and environment, activities and use of equipment. All electrical equipment is regularly safety tested. Fire safety equipment is tested regularly and fire drills exceed the required number.

The company have good staff recruitment systems in place, staff records held at the company headquarters office are inspected regularly by inspectors from that region and have been found to be good. However, staff profiles held in the home could not be accessed by the temporary manager as she did not have a key to the confidential filing cabinet.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with good individual support including regular one-to-one meetings with key-workers. These are well recorded and include topics such as

emotional well-being, behaviour, relationships, and any specific concerns that young people may have. More specialist support is also available to young people through external agencies such as child and adolescent mental health services, drugs and alcohol services and a visiting psychotherapist. Individual support is very caring and nurturing and includes, for example, night settling plans for individual young people. Young people say that they feel they benefit from this highly individualised support.

Not all young people have personal education plans, and neither is currently attending school, although only one is of compulsory school age. Young people who refuse the education provided are found alternative options such as work experience programmes which they have enjoyed. However one young person has received no formal education since being placed in the home, despite saying that they would attend if it were arranged. Arrangements to formally meet their educational needs were being prepared, but not implemented at the time of this inspection. There are adequate facilities in the home for young people to work quietly and in privacy if required.

Young people are encouraged to participate in a wide range of leisure activities. Staff are very aware of individual preferences and provide transport to local towns in order to access leisure facilities. These include swimming, horse riding, shopping, outdoor activities and accessing the computer in the library.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Each young person has a placement plan which is drawn up in consultation with them shortly after being placed at the home. These plans are detailed and cover each of the Every Child Matters outcome groups. The plans identify needs and detail how they will be met on a day-to-day basis. Young people are encouraged to participate in this planning and have regular meetings with key-workers to address issues raised in the plans. Any shortfalls in information provided by placing social workers are actively followed up by the home.

Placement reviews are held within appropriate timescales and young people are invited to attend. Young people say, that their views are listened to in their reviews and planning meetings.

Each young person has a contact plan which outlines the arrangements for contact between a young person and their families. Staff are aware of the contact arrangements for each child, and promote contact in accordance with the placing authority care plan.

Some, but not all, young people are given the opportunity to visit the home prior to their admission. All young people are welcomed to the home and receive a card welcoming them. The home undertakes an impact risk assessment to identify the impact of a new placement on the existing group and how those risks will be

managed. At the last key inspection it was reported that there had been significant improvements in the home's capacity to meet the needs of children. Since that inspection there have been further placements that have not led to successful outcomes for that young person or for others living in the home.

Young people are very well consulted and confirm that they are able to contribute to the daily running of the home. There are formal meetings held regularly in which young people can share their views and a very comfortable atmosphere in which they can clearly express themselves and their opinions to staff about the running of the home and the planning for their future. Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff, and say that they enjoy living in the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Not all young people living in the home are of an age to have leaving care plans in place, however there is an informal programme of independence training designed to give young people the life skills that they will need to make a successful transition to adulthood. Young people say that staff help them in developing the skills they will need. The programme is appropriate to each individual's need and stage of development. The home also offers support to young people after they have left the home.

Young people receive regular allowances for clothing and personal toiletries in addition to their pocket money. This can be increased by additional incentive payments that can be earned through the behaviour management system. They are able to buy clothes and personal items of their choice and staff support this by providing transport to local towns. Young people say they are happy with this arrangement.

The home is located in a very rural setting and provides placements for up to four young people; transport is required to access local shops and leisure facilities. The property is a large detached bungalow with large gardens suitable for outdoor play and recreation. Communal accommodation includes a large lounge, an activities room, dining area and kitchen. All young people have single bedrooms and there are separate sleeping and bathroom facilities for staff sleeping. The home is able to meet the needs of the young people living there.

The home shows signs of heavy use and considerable damage. There is an improvement plan in place and the home is now partly redecorated and re-furnished. Two of the young people's bedrooms are very pleasantly decorated and furnished, with some highly personalised features where young people have contributed to the décor. Young people say they are very happy with their rooms. The lounge is recently re-decorated and very comfortably furnished along with the kitchen and dining room. Both entrances to the home, the games room, and the remainder of the

building still require refurbishment and detract from the overall appearance of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is reflected in the individual programmes of care and staff are very aware and responsive to each young person's individual needs.

The Statement of Purpose is reviewed annually; it has been recently amended and now shows the change in remit for the home and management structure.

The manager and four staff members hold the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), at level three or higher, however there are six staff members who are not yet registered to undertake NVQ. The minimum requirement of 80 per cent appropriately of staff qualified to this level is not met.

All newly appointed staff undertake an induction programme, which covers all of the organisations policies and procedures and incorporates the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards. Staff receive regular supervision, and there is an on-going staff development programme. Staff supervision records were not able to be verified as the temporary manager was not able to access the confidential filing cabinet.

There are sufficient staff to fully meet the needs of the young people living at the home. However with a large number of probationary staff with limited experience there are periods of the day or certain activities off site in which probationary staff members are left in sole charge of children.

Staff and management turnover is high and does not provide stability and consistency for young people. The home has had five managers and one temporary manager in 11 months. Staff say that there have been periods when the home has been without a manager in that time.

The quality of the service is monitored by a visiting manager and by the manager each of whom produce detailed reports. The quality of the monitoring reports produced is good, however not all of the managers reports have been completed as a result of the frequent changes in manager.

The young people's case files hold all of the key information required and are well structured, up to date and regularly audited.

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
32	ensure that the appointment of temporary staff or managers to the home will not prevent young people from receiving continuity of care (Regulation 25 (2))	31/12/2010
14	ensure that children access educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential. (Regulation 18(1)(a))	31/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that records relating to complaints fully demonstrate that appropriate procedures have been followed including action taken and outcome and that this is communicated to the complainant (NMS 16.3)
- demonstrate that, subsequent to any physical intervention, young people are offered the opportunity to be examined by a registered nurse or medical practitioner within 24 hours (NMS 22.13)
- ensure that each child has a personal education plan that shows how the home will promote educational attainment (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that all children of compulsory school age who are not in school has in place an educational programme during normal school hours (NMS 14.7)
- ensure that a minimum of 80 per cent of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification level 3 in caring for children and young people and that new staff, who do not already hold this qualification, are working towards it within 3 months of joining the home (NMS 29.5)
- ensure that every effort is made to achieve continuity of staffing such that children's attachments are not overly disrupted. (NMS 30.3)