

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	25 November 2009
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender, aged from 10 to 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities. The home is a detached five bedroom farmhouse situated in open countryside. It is in a remote location and transport is required to access education, community facilities and services.

There are gardens to the front and side of the house in addition to a driveway for car parking. A range of outbuildings are situated to the rear of the property. On the ground floor there is a large kitchen with a dining area, a staff office, toilet and lounge. The first floor has the young people's individual bedrooms and their bathroom.

Summary

This was a full unannounced inspection that focused on key national minimum standards. Two young people were living at the home and were present during part of the visit. The inspection concentrated on areas relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well-being and how staffing and management arrangements supported the operation of the home.

The overall judgement for this service is good. The manager and staff team provide young people with a safe, comfortable and homely environment. Staff have a clear focus on supporting each young person according to their agreed individual plans of care. Staff receive good support from managers to help them do their work. Young people are supported to develop their own identity and to develop life skills that are consistent with their needs and circumstances. Young people are able to make meaningful contributions to the running of the home because their views and opinions are valued.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection, the registered person was required to: provide young people with access to a telephone without reference to staff; ensure placement plans were consistent with those of the placing authority; make necessary notifications in relation to safety and welfare matters; ensure the use of restraint was not excessive or unreasonable and that all parts of the home were suitably maintained, furnished, equipped and clean.

In addition, requirements were also made to ensure that: there were sufficient staff working in the home who were appropriately trained; notice was given in writing to Ofsted about the Registered Manager leaving the home; the home was managed with sufficient care, competence and skill, and full information was obtained from placing authorities in respect of each young person's needs and development.

The home has undergone significant change since the last inspection and improvements have been made in many areas of the service's operation. Consequently, the statutory requirements made at the last inspection have been addressed and met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's good health and well-being is well promoted because arrangements for meeting all medical needs are effectively managed and organised. Staff are well informed about young people's needs because this information is reflected in detailed health plans which are frequently updated. Medical and health records are comprehensive and clearly show that medical appointments are arranged according to the needs of each individual. Young people's needs are being closely monitored because staff are focused on helping them maintain their good health. Staff talk to young people in one-to-one sessions about health related matters. These discussions are held privately and provide good opportunities for young people to learn about how to stay fit and healthy.

Young people's medication is safely stored, administered and managed because staff follow prescription instructions and are trained in delivering safe administration routines. Also, staff are trained first aiders so they are able to respond appropriately to such things as accidents and medical emergencies.

Young people are provided with a varied and well-balanced diet that includes freshly prepared foods. The weekly menu planner reflects young people's preferences but also provides for some flexibility in terms of day-to-day choice. Healthy snacks, including a wide variety of fresh fruit is always available. Staff are very good at encouraging and nurturing young people's interest in food, actively involving them in cooking and domestic related routines which helps to develop their life skills.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's safety and protection is supported by a range of organisational policies and procedures that help guide the staff team in providing safe care. This includes making formal notifications to a number of external agencies about a range of significant events that can affect young people's safety. The manager ensures that staff are equipped and trained with the necessary knowledge and understanding to fulfil their safeguarding role and responsibilities. In addition, young people are provided with staff who have been properly checked and vetted before they start work in the home. As a result of these arrangements, young people's welfare is positively promoted.

The home's staff work in partnership with other agencies to ensure safeguarding procedures are followed and that young people's safety is promoted. Staff demonstrate a good grasp of the key methods for keeping young people safe as the home's records consistently detail discussions and actions that relate to each young person's circumstances and needs. Staff understand the need to respond appropriately to complaints from young people, to work within the child protection and Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and to promote a bullying free environment. Young people and staff know that bullying is not tolerated and staff interventions are consistent with the home's bullying policy. Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected. For instance, staff understand the importance of storing personal information safely and that young people are able to talk to people on the phone in private.

Young people's safety continues to be important when their whereabouts are unknown, because staff follow agreed safeguarding procedures. This results in practices that are consistent with

wider police protocols for reporting young people who abscond. Staff have good links with other services to ensure a coordinated approach is taken to promote young people's protection and safe return home. The home's records demonstrate how staff are working with young people to try and decrease the risks associated with this kind of behaviour. Young people are being actively discouraged from having time away from the home without permission.

Young people are being supported by positive behaviour management practices that are fair and consistent. Interactions between staff and young people are supportive and based on providing clear behavioural boundaries. Staff are trained in specific behaviour management strategies and techniques. Records demonstrate that very few physical interventions have been used since the last inspection. Young people are rewarded for positive behaviour and where necessary staff use a range of sanctions as a consequence for poor behaviour. The manager monitors the use of the behaviour management systems to ensure staff practice is in line with the home's policies and individually agreed plans of care.

The management of health and safety processes is good which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or injury. The home's equipment and utilities are regularly serviced. Fire safety tests are carried out that include fire drills and practise evacuations. Young people's safety is further protected by staff who are trained in fire safety and who know what to do in an emergency. All visitors to the home are monitored because they are required to provide evidence of their identity and to sign a visitors' book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are receiving a considerable amount of individual support from staff and other professionals who visit the home. The manager and key workers regularly review information about individual needs so that the whole staff team are kept informed about important issues that are relevant to each young person. This approach is particularly effective because of the very different needs young people have in relation to school and post educational arrangements. Young people's current needs are very different and the manager and staff team are working in a way that is individualised and supportive. The value of learning, training and the world of work is promoted well which means young people receive positive messages about the range of opportunities open to them.

Young people are provided with an environment where they are treated as individuals and respected regardless of their backgrounds or care history. Staff understand the need to promote social inclusion and to challenge any form of discrimination. Young people live in an environment where they are treated fairly and with equal regard.

Young people are supported and encouraged to develop their social skills and independence away from the home. Staff are continually making assessments in relation to appropriate levels of care, support and supervision, and a young person's ability to develop independence and to negotiate their own place in the community. Known and potential risks to young people are assessed, recorded and reviewed on a regular basis. Staff are using the home's records and their knowledge of each young person to ensure risks are minimised and that they are safe.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's placement plans are detailed and informative. The plans are regularly updated and are consistent with other information held in individual case files about young people's needs. Key workers provide regular written reports outlining young people's progress. This results in key professionals being regularly informed about how well young people are doing in terms of their individual plans. Young people are able to maintain valued relationships with family and friends through appropriately agreed contact arrangements. Records demonstrated that contact for young people is clearly defined and any restrictions are discussed and recorded. Young people benefit from a service that places a high importance on supporting and encouraging appropriate family contact.

Young people benefit from daily consultation with staff about their individual care needs and daily routines. They freely express their views about the day-to-day running of the home because staff encourage dialogue to promote choice and involvement in many areas of the home's operation. In addition, staff use a number of more formal ways to consult with young people which include frequent house meetings and key worker sessions. The home's established culture of consultation also extends to newly arriving young people where their views and opinions are used to shape how staff support them to settle in. This results in young people feeling that they have a say about their daily lives and future plans.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with accommodation that is furnished and equipped to a good standard which creates a pleasant and comfortable living environment. The home provides the right internal environment to ensure the social and personal comfort of each young person is being met. Young people have a say in how the home is decorated and furnished which helps them feel included and involved in how the home is run.

Young people are being supported to develop their knowledge and experience in preparation for leaving care and achieving independence. Staff provide good support and encouragement to help young people focus on their aspirations and goals as they move towards adulthood. Young people are provided with a range of opportunities, practical activities and domestic routines to help them develop their independent living skills.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The service is effectively managed which contributes to the home having a good focus on outcomes for young people. The home's staffing arrangements are clearly organised to ensure that the changing needs of young people can be met. The new manager is in the process of registering with Ofsted to ensure the regulatory requirements for this role are achieved. The home's Statement of Purpose provides a good range of information about the service. The document has been recently reviewed to ensure it accurately reflects what the service does and who works in the home. Young people are well informed about what the home does because this information is given to them in a child-friendly summary.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are benefiting from living in a home where the manager and staff team are committed to meeting the diverse needs of each young person. Staff are well informed about young people's needs in relation to their identity

and backgrounds and are fully aware of how to help and support them in a fair and non-judgemental way.

The new manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for young people in their care. There are well planned handover times to ensure effective communication between shifts takes place. This is to ensure that staff working with young people on any given day know about each young person's progress and needs. The staff team are either qualified to National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at Level 3 or are working towards this qualification. Managers have good information systems to inform them about the team's training and development needs.

There are good management systems in place for monitoring and reviewing the operation of the home. Regular external monitoring visits are carried out by the provider and recent reports detail what is working well and what improvements are needed. In addition, the manager has internal systems in place to review how well young people's needs are being met. Written reports are produced giving an overall picture of the home's operation which includes actions to be taken to improve the quality of care provided.

Young people's case files are kept securely and contain an appropriate range of information about their history and progress which matches the requirements set out in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Young people are able to access their records as case files evidence a chronology of times and dates when each young person does this.

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 meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

There are no recommendations.