

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	9 January 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 years to 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties and learning disabilities.

The home is a detached five bedroom farmhouse situated in open countryside. The home is in a remote location and transport is required to access education, community facilities and services.

There are gardens to the front and side and car parking within the grounds. A range of outbuildings are situated to the rear of the house. On the ground floor is a large kitchen and sitting area, a separate dining room and lounge. The first floor has the staff office, young people's individual bedrooms and house bathroom.

Summary

At this full, unannounced inspection, all the key national minimum standards were inspected. No recommendations or actions were made at the last inspection.

The home has weaknesses in the outcome areas of staying safe, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation. These relate primarily to privacy, bedroom furnishings, challenging behaviour, staffing, impact of new admissions in the home, notification of significant events and management of the home.

Staff understand the need for young people to maintain good health and a healthy lifestyle is promoted. Very good support is offered to young people throughout their stay at the home and they have the benefit of a designated key worker.

Staff view education as an important part of the young people's lives and encourage them to attend school, college or to seek work opportunities. Young people benefit from access to the provider's school which enables education placements to be maintained.

Overall the staffing and management arrangements do not adequately promote and safeguard the well-being of the young people.

Actions and recommendations to ensure the young people's welfare is fully promoted have been made.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have choices in respect of foods they wish to eat in the home. They are encouraged to take an active role in the planning, shopping and preparation of meals which

helps them learn skills for independence. Staff encourage young people to eat a balanced diet and offer good advice about healthy eating. Snacks, including fresh fruit are freely available in the home.

The home has a well-furnished dining room, which gives the young people the opportunity to sit at the dining table and to have their meals with the other young people and staff. The variety of meals and the support from staff allows young people lots of choice and an opportunity to sample foods associated with different countries and cultures, for example, India and Greece.

Staff understand the need for young people to maintain good health and ensure they have access to primary health care services, for their routine health needs to be met. More specialist advice is available to the young people from health professionals, for example, the looked after children's nurse and child and adolescent mental health service. Young people receive good advice and guidance in relation to health and social matters and this includes an emphasis on leading a healthy way of life.

Activities such as football and swimming are actively promoted so that young people gain the physical health benefits associated with these activities.

Staff have a good awareness about the administration and storage of medication. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed. Medication is securely stored in the home and records are very well monitored to confirm appropriate practices are in place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have individual bedrooms and arrangements are in hand for them to have a key to their bedroom door which means they have the privacy of their own room. Although young people are allowed to make calls from the office phone, there is no phone in the home to allow them to make calls in private without having to refer to staff.

Effective arrangements are in place in relation to complaints and bullying. Young people have opportunities to let staff know about any matters they are unhappy with. Young people also have access to persons outside of the home, including advocacy, health and education professionals.

Staff receive child protection training and are aware of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures in order to help keep young people safe from harm. Staff know how to respond in the event of any allegation or serious concern about a young person's safety and take action to keep young people safe. Young people said they do feel safe living in this home.

Young people's good behaviour is actively encouraged and rewards such as days out to the coast are given. Permanent staff and bank staff receive training in techniques to manage challenging behaviour, including the appropriate use of physical intervention. Agency staff work at the home but there is no evidence to confirm they receive the same level of training or that this is compatible to the techniques used in the home.

Incentive schemes are in place to encourage the young people's positive behaviour. There are times when staff use physical intervention to prevent young people from causing significant harm to themselves or others and to prevent significant damage to property. A 12 month period

shows there have been 47 physical interventions used by staff. There are also recent incidents when police have been called to deal with young people's unacceptable behaviour and on occasions an arrest and charge has been made due to their anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Significant events affecting the welfare of young people are recorded in the home. However, not all required notifications are forwarded, without delay, to Ofsted which is a breach of regulations.

The home environment is well maintained with systems in place for health and safety checks to be carried out. Young people and staff are fully aware of the fire evacuation procedures and know what to do in the event of a fire in the home. Thorough recruitment and employment checks are carried out by the provider to verify staff employed at the home are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people have good individual support from staff and external agencies when needed. This includes the benefit of a designated key worker, which allows young people the opportunity to talk about a diverse range of issues on a one-to-one basis, such as smoking cessation, and sexual and social relationships.

To support a young person who came to this home from another of the provider's homes, arrangements were made for staff from the young person's previous home to work shifts in this home. This offers the young person reassurance and a familiar face in their new placement.

Staff view education as an important part of the young people's lives and encourage them to attend school, college or to seek work opportunities. Young people are able to access education at a school run by the provider and transport is made available to enable them to attend. The staff work closely with the young people's school or college and have regular contact with their teachers. This supports young people very well with their education and helps to maintain their placement.

Personal education plans are drawn up with the relevant professionals and show the home's awareness and contribution to the young people's educational achievements and needs.

Although education is well promoted, the home does not at this time have the benefit of a computer for the sole use of the young people. They do have limited availability to the computer situated in the staff office. However, staff are proactive and liaise with placing authorities to try and ensure young people obtain a laptop computer. Library membership is facilitated for all young people and there is a good selection of books and games in the home for their use.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's placement plans contain information relating to their care needs and show how staff are to meet these. For the most recent resident, the looked after children documentation from their placing authority does not refer to this placement. This means information is lacking about how the authority expect this home to fully meet the young person's care needs.

The home has systems in place for the statutory review of young people's care. Key workers ensure young people's views are taken account of and encourage them to attend review meetings. Young people said they attend their review meetings and have a say in decisions that affect their future. Young people's placement plans are updated with the outcomes of these meetings.

Young people are enabled to make choices about contact with family and friends. Although contact is actively promoted, this is done in line with placement plans for each young person. The promotion of contact means young people continue to have positive links with those people who are important to them outside of the home. Practical support is given for contact to take place, such as the provision of transport.

Admissions to the home are usually planned. The recent admission of a young person to the home is said to be a short notice placement rather than as an emergency placement. However, there is no recorded impact assessment to show the needs of the young person concerned, and that the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents, are adequately taken into account.

Young people are asked their opinions about issues that affect their daily life and future. This includes obtaining their views about aspects of the running of the home, for example, through house meetings, choices of decoration for their bedrooms, menus and activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from staff who encourage them to learn skills that will help them as they move towards leaving care and independent living. Opportunities in the home allow young people to undertake household tasks and to gain an understanding about looking after themselves.

Young people are fully involved in menu planning, shopping and cooking meals. Staff also encourage young people to have bank accounts so that they understand the benefit of saving and spending wisely. Young people of an age to leave care are fully supported by staff and have suitable plans in place in respect of this.

The home is decorated and furnished to a very good standard with the exception of one young person's bedroom. Communal rooms provide a very comfortable and homely environment. The home has a spacious modern bathroom with bath and separate shower. The kitchen is very well equipped making it a pleasant area for young people to use.

Three young people have bedrooms that are suitably decorated and furnished to meet their needs. The fourth bedroom has a badly stained carpet, damaged wardrobe, no drawers, no chair or bedside table. The room was not adequately prepared prior to the planned admission of a young person and therefore does not meet their needs. The manager confirmed new furniture is on order for this bedroom. Facilities in the home provide young people with privacy and include the availability of rooms in which to see their visitors.

Young people who require personal requisites, such as sanitary protection, have to approach staff on duty and ask them to provide this from the stock kept in the home. This matter is personal to each young person and the arrangement does not promote their dignity.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The Statement of Purpose reflects what the home offers and the care provided to young people. Young people receive written and verbal information that outlines the routines of the home and details of the care given.

There are adequate levels of staffing in the home to take account of the assessed needs of the young people. An unsettled period in the home has brought with it challenging behaviour and young people comment on how this is dealt with by staff, in particular police involvement.

The week when the most recent young person was admitted to the home, staffing was such that of the 11 staff working during that week only four were members of the permanent staff team. The seven non-permanent staff included two from an agency, one from the 'bank' and four different staff brought in from the provider's other children's homes. This means there is a lack of consistency and continuity in staffing arrangements. Although the staff from other homes are well known to the new admission and provide continuity for them, this is not so for the other young people.

There is an ongoing programme of training to enable staff to obtain appropriate childcare qualifications. At this time over 66% of the nine permanent staff employed have a suitable qualification. Staff take the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 award, which assists them to gain a better understanding about caring for the young people who live in this home.

Staff undertake training which helps increase their skills and competency in their work with the young people. As well as mandatory training which includes first aid and safeguarding, there is additional training provided, for example, life story work and attachment disorder. However, there is some uncertainty about the more specific training available for agency staff, for example, physical intervention training.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. There are areas within staying safe and management of the home that do not fully promote the welfare and protection of the young people. Staff are keen to ensure young people have access to education and discussion takes place on a wide range of local and worldwide topics. However, some young people are openly racist, in particular to staff, and arrangements for how the home deal with this are unclear.

Systems of management and monitoring are in place but management of the home does not adequately ensure the best care for the young people, for example, the inconsistent staffing arrangements and the lack of notification in relation to significant events. The Registered Manager of this home has now left, an acting manager who is new to this management role has been in post since October 2009. The provider has not notified Ofsted of this position or the interim arrangements for managing the home in the absence of a Registered Manager, which is a breach of regulations.

The established care staff team are confident and give firm and consistent boundaries in response to the young people's negative behaviours. They present as a caring and nurturing staff group. However, the dynamics and care needs of the young people mean staff are constantly occupied to provide young people with one-to-one supervision. An occasion when

young people were supervised by agency staff brought into question the staff's competence in meeting the care needs of the young people.

Young people's records are maintained and have information relating to their individual history and progress at the home. However, not all young people have up-to-date information in respect of their care and placement plans as required from their placing authorities.

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
9	provide young people with access to a telephone without reference to staff on which to make and receive calls in private (Regulation 15.4)	29 December 2009
2	ensure placement plans in the home are consistent with those of the placing authority to promote young people's welfare (Regulation 12)	15 December 2009
20	notify without delay, in relation to a children's home, any incidents relating to the welfare of children listed in Schedule 5 (Regulation 30)	15 December 2009
22	ensure the use of restraint is not excessive or unreasonable (Regulation 17.1)	15 December 2009
24	ensure all parts of the children's home are suitably furnished and equipped, kept clean, reasonably decorated and maintained, in particular young people's bedrooms (Regulation 31.2)	15 December 2009
5	ensure the home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11)	15 December 2009
30	ensure that there is at all times, having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the health and welfare of the children accommodated in the home, a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25)	15 December 2009
31	ensure staff working in the home, in particular agency staff, receive appropriate training to meet the needs of children living in the home (Regulation 27.4)	15 December 2009
34	ensure notice is given in writing to Ofsted of the Registered Manager ceasing to manage the home (Regulation 38)	15 December 2009

34	ensure the home is managed with sufficient care, competence and skill (Regulation 9.1)	15 December 2009
35	obtain the information specified in Schedule 3 in respect of each child, in particular up-to-date care and placement plans from the placing authority. (Regulation 28)	15 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- provide for young people equipment to assist study and to do homework, in particular a computer in the home (Regulation 14.5)
- ensure young women have their own supply of sanitary protection and do not have to request it from a central stock (11.5)
- ensure a minimum of 80% of care staff have the appropriate NVQ at level 3 care award or equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)