

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
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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 is a privately run and owned children's home by a company with a number of other registered homes. The responsible individual is a qualified social worker with considerable relevant childcare experience.

This particular home is registered to accommodate up to two young people of either sex from 10 to 17 years old. Its overall aim is 'to meet the needs of young people, work together to effect changes which are positive, and enable the young people to realise their potential'.

It is a detached and spacious property standing in its own private grounds, and has no distinguishing features to suggest it is a children's home. On the ground floor there is a domestic kitchen and separate utility room, an education room, dining room, a communal lounge and toileting facilities. On the second, there is a choice of baths and showers and all the bedrooms are single which young people can personalise.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This judgement is reached following an unannounced interim inspection of the home. The response to the two recommendations made at the last inspection was assessed and the regulations, key national minimum standards and outcomes for looked after children in respect to staying safe. Specific standards under enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation were also explored. All were found to be outstanding. Moreover, the robust monitoring systems in place ensure that the firmly established and excellent systems, practices and recordings in place at this home are maintained.

There are outstanding arrangements in place to safeguard and promote the welfare of looked after children. Young people say, 'staff really care and help me a lot.' Consequently, they are very happy at this home and are making excellent progress. This includes reintegration and full attendance at school and developing age appropriate independence skills. Positive relationships with family have also been re-established and consequently 'contact is going really well'. They enjoy sound relationships with the staff and say, 'they know me very well. They have got me down to a t'. They also really like their bedrooms which they choose and personalise and enjoy the meals provided. They say, 'staff encourage me to eat healthily.'

Parents are also highly satisfied with the quality of care provided at this home and staff regularly receive cards of appreciation which read, 'just want to thank you for

all you have done for my daughter and for all the love and care you have shown her. She has really done well while with you all'.

Two recommendations have been made following this inspection. One is ensuring at least 80% of the staff team obtain a National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at level 3. The second is to ensure there is clear documentary evidence that young people have the opportunity to see someone independent of the home on their return from being missing to discuss the reasons for their absence and any issues raised are efficiently addressed.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made following the last key inspection on 17 June 2010. In response three members of staff have now successfully completed a National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at Level 3, but due to recent staff changes there is still not at least 80% of the team qualified in line with the national minimum standards.

There is now clear documentary evidence of regular consultation with young people, their relatives and social workers and without exception, the feedback is extremely positive. Moreover, the formats for reporting on Regulation 33 and 34 monitoring have been revised to ensure this information is captured.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Overall there are outstanding arrangements in place to help to ensure that the young people living at this home, staff who work there, and all visitors are kept safe.

Young people say, 'it's like a home here, not a children's home' and, 'I am in a good place now, probably the best'. Consequently, they are making excellent progress since moving to this particular home. As examples, fire setting, absconding and self harming behaviours have all ceased and there has been no recent restraints.

Young people confirm that their privacy is respected. They say, 'staff always knock on my bedroom door and wait for me to invite them in. They never just walk in.' Established arrangements include single bedrooms which they can lock with their own key, personal mobiles and credit to ensure they keep in touch with staff when they are out in the community and a choice of communal rooms to entertain visitors in private.

Young people say they feel able to approach any member of staff about any concerns they may have and, 'I feel really listened to.' They also know how to formally complain and some have exercised this right. The records are well maintained evidencing that they are taken seriously, fully investigated and outcomes reached in a timely manner. Moreover, young people are very happy with the process which includes receiving an initial letter acknowledging their complaint, being kept well informed of the progress and receiving an outcome letter.

All staff are trained in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of looked after children and in countering bullying to ensure an appropriate response to any allegations. Significant events are notified to Ofsted in a timely manner as is legally required, which clearly evidence that any concerns are forwarded to the relevant agencies. Staff also continue to work in close partnership with them to ensure young people are protected and that they receive any specialist services required.

Effective protocols are also in place with the local police in respect to young people who may go missing from the home. The documentation in place clearly evidences that all relevant people are informed of their safe return and an individual key worker session is undertaken with the young person to explore the circumstances of their absence in more depth. However, records suggest that there is not always the opportunity for them to see someone independent of the home on their return from being missing to discuss the reasons for their absence in line, with the national minimum standards.

Good behaviour and effort is actively encouraged and rewarded which is very clearly having the desired effect. In particular, young people respond positively to the visual displays of footprints in the hallway leading to the door. These show the excellent progress made in all outcome areas and signify that as a direct consequence their independence time in the community is constantly increasing. Young people especially benefit from the clear and consistent boundaries in place. They also take up the opportunity to comment on the few sanctions imposed. These records evidence that they are fair, relevant and proportionate to the particular misdemeanour and very effective. Comments include, 'I learnt my lesson' and, 'This was fair. I'm sorry, It was a stupid thing to do.' Moreover, if young people do raise any issues they are efficiently followed up by the manager, giving them the clear message that their views matter.

Health and safety records are in very good order and all the staff are specifically trained. All the required safety certificates are in place to evidence a safe and well maintained building and risk assessments are regularly revised and updated as necessary. There is also very clear documentary evidence that all internal fire safety checks are undertaken at the required frequencies and monthly fire evacuations take place at different times of the day and evening. These always involve young people so they know exactly what to do in the event of a real fire.

The firmly established and robust recruitment and selection processes in place exceed the expectations of the regulations and national minimum standards. For example, references are always actively followed up and there is an effective system

in place for the renewal of criminal record checks every three years. Staff files are well maintained and include all the legally required information to evidence a safe and competent workforce.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are outstanding opportunities for young people to enjoy and achieve at this home and to reach their full potential. This includes the timely provision of appropriate specialist services to meet their assessed needs.

In particular, staff actively promote and support their education. Consequently they are attending school and college every day and are making excellent progress which their relatives are especially pleased about. Moreover, young people are now 'loving school' and, to their credit, have also been involved in raising money for charity.

In recognition of their excellent behaviour and progress young people were recently treated to, and thoroughly enjoyed, an all inclusive holiday abroad.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

There are outstanding arrangements in place to help to ensure that young people are admitted and discharged from this home in a gradual and sensitive manner. This includes staff working extra hours to ensure young people are fully prepared to move into their own accommodation. Moreover, young people are so appreciative of the support afforded them at this home that they wrote individually to every member of staff following discharge. Comments include, 'Thank you so much for everything. I am going to miss you loads', 'you have always been there for me through thick and thin' and, 'you are a right laugh and such a good person.'

Young people recently admitted to this home confirm, 'it's proper planned here. They came to see me and told me all about the home and the rules, and then I came here for tea and went to see my new school'. Parents say, 'I am very pleased the way my daughter has settled and also the staff are giving her a lot of support which I am very grateful for.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

There are firmly established and robust monitoring systems in place to ensure that the consistently high quality service provided at this home is maintained. It is always sufficiently and specifically staffed to meet the unique needs and personal preferences of the particular young people living at the home, and rotas include a full handover to ensure consistency of practice. Suitable arrangements are in place to deputise in the absence of the Registered Manager.

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):

- continue the ongoing programme of National Vocational Qualifications in Caring for Children and Young People at Level 3 until at least 80% of the staff team are trained (NMS 29.5)
- ensure there is clear documentary evidence that young people have the opportunity to see someone independent of the home on their return from being missing to discuss the reasons for their absence and any issues raised are efficiently addressed. (NMS 19.4)