

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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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 children's home is in a large detached and refurbished farmhouse. It is set back from the main road along a private lane. The home provides care and accommodation for up to two young people although usually it is used as a single occupancy unit. Admissions are planned with medium to long-term placements being accommodated. The staff aim to provide safe, age appropriate and needs-led care in a nurturing and empowering environment for young people with challenging behaviour.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full unannounced key inspection. One young person is living in the home who was present during the inspection and briefly contributed to the process. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as good. Young people receive an individualised care package that is sufficiently flexible to respond to emerging needs and is effective in addressing behaviour to promote health and well-being. The home is adequately decorated and maintained providing a generally homely environment in which young people are nurtured and enabled to develop. The manager provides good direction and leadership to a committed, well-trained staff team thereby enabling a good quality of overall service. Staff are clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the care needs of the young people they look after.

One action and one recommendation are made as a result of this inspection

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered person was required to make improvements to the condition and décor of the home's shared bathroom. This has been achieved. The registered person was furthermore recommended to ensure that individual health plans were amended to include further levels of detail. This recommendation has also been satisfactorily acted upon. An additional recommendation, that the access road to the home be safely maintained, continues to fall below acceptable standards and is addressed by way of an action. This shortfall potentially presents the risk of damage to vehicles and people visiting the home. It is unfortunate that this environmental shortfall is beyond the operational remit of the house manager as it deflects attention from the positive level of care being provided to young people by this children's home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged to develop an awareness of healthy eating and the importance of a balanced diet as an important contributor to being healthy. Individual preferences and allergies are taken into account when producing the home's menus and arranging mealtimes. Menu planning is inclusive, offering access to a variety of dishes including those from different cultures. Young people are introduced to self-help skills, as part of their daily routine.

The health needs of young people are assessed prior to and during their placement at the home to ensure that all their needs can be provided for. They are practically supported when they are unwell by staff arranging general practitioner appointments and preventive routines such as optical and dental checks. Young people have succinct health plans that indicate how relevant guidance, informed advice and practical support can be provided. Some young people require ongoing reminders of the importance of hygiene and dental health. Personal and sexual health education is included in the registered provider's school curriculum and introduced where appropriate within the home's practice.

Young people can, with help, access external services and professionals to help them with any specific emotional, social or medical needs. These complement the in house therapy sessions provided by the registered person.

Young people's health and safety is actively promoted by the registered provider's policies, procedures, guidance and staff training. Staff receive training in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid. Medicine is stored securely in a lockable cabinet and accurately recorded when dispensed. Good arrangements are in place for the treatment and recording of any accidents occurring within the home and where there is any doubt about a young person's medical condition the accident and emergency department of the local hospital is visited.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The children's home promotes young people's right to privacy by ensuring administrative confidentiality by protecting sensitive personal information and being careful when staff communicate information about young people to parents or other professionals. Young people are provided with their own bathing and toilet facilities. Bedrooms are all single occupancy and located so that they meet young people's need for reassurance and personal safety at night.

Any concerns or complaints made by young people living at the home are taken seriously by care staff. This is demonstrated by everyday issues and concerns being routinely discussed and addressed before they become a cause for complaint. When

complaints are made they are looked into by the house manager. The registered provider has a clear and responsive complaint policy that is summarised by the young person's guide to the home and followed in practice. Young people spoken with during the inspection say that they know how to complain and who they address a complaint to. They have access to a visiting independent advocacy service and the monthly regulation 33 visitor should they require external help or support in making their concerns known.

The welfare and safety of young people living at the home is promoted by staff adhering to the policies produced by the registered provider. These policies recognise regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection that include countering bullying, effective behaviour management and the safeguarding of children and young people. Staff can readily access on-line statutory guidance including the procedures of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Staff are trained to recognise and report signs of child abuse. The registered provider makes available regular staff development opportunities to ensure that its employees are equipped and skilled to look after young people safely. Young people living at the home know that they should be looked after in a way that ensures they are not hurt, abused or put at risk in any way.

Routine systems for the internal and external monitoring of the home by independent people ensure that young people have an unrestricted opportunity to express their views. The home ensures the safety of young people by having tried and tested reporting systems in place to notify relevant authorities about significant events, including any unauthorised absences. In house young people have regular key worker meetings and a weekly children's meeting as forums for having their views heard and recorded.

The management of behaviour is effective because it is focused on consistently encouraging and rewarding acceptable conduct. This is achieved by staff providing explicit expectations and by practice that reinforces, through the use of verbal praise, all examples of positive sociable activity. Young people know what the standards of behaviour expected from them are and what the rules of the home are. Staff are adept at understanding the triggers for poor behaviour and help young people take control of these situations by providing explanations and suggesting alternative acceptable responses. Resident numbers, individual care needs and risk assessment influence the home's staffing levels to ensure that an appropriate, safe level of supervision is always present. Staff receive statutory training to understand and manage escalating levels of poor behaviour. This includes the reasonable application of an accredited form of physical restraint where necessary. Any behavioural incidents or applied sanctions are always reviewed by the home's manager. Young people are asked to provide their views after such events to help evaluate the safety, transparency and effectiveness of staff behaviour management practice in the home. The home's records identify a reducing need for physical intervention by staff.

The home assesses its responses to any potential dangers to looked after children by producing a broad range of risk assessments that cover all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, the risk from fire and hazards, or from young

people's behaviour and recreational activities. Risk assessments are generally effective because they are reviewed regularly and take into account daily tasks and any changes affecting the home such as changes of resident, any revised staffing levels or changes to the home's routine. Risk assessments also highlight and identify concerns with the location of the home. Currently the farm track access road to the home and external hard standing for vehicles is of inadequate construction and standard as evidenced by the damage it causes to the underside of vehicles and the high risk of people slipping on its muddy surface when wet.

The home employs robust procedures for monitoring all visitors. No unauthorised person can access the building or have access to the young people living there. Staff personnel files were examined ahead of this inspection confirming effective recruitment practice. The manager is vigilant in ensuring that only appropriately checked and cleared staff are appointed to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people living at the home are looked after by staff who collectively take responsibility for the safe delivery and monitoring of individual care and placement plans. A reduction in the incidence of challenging behaviour confirms that positive relationships between staff and young people are improving socialisation and outcomes. These improving relationships support general health and well-being, special interests, religious and cultural needs of young people. The staff team actively promote involvement for young people in special interests and community based recreational activities where these are assessed as safe and appropriate.

Young people can be helped to understand their behaviour by having access to qualified therapists employed by the registered provider.

Educational achievement is promoted through the registered provider's education policy and the home's commitment to ensuring young people are practically encouraged to understand the value of school. Age appropriate education is provided by the organisation which is designed to suit individual academic abilities and interests. Young people are transported, accompanied and supported throughout their school day by residential staff working in partnership with teachers to ensure the individualised curriculum is promoted. Educational needs are specifically addressed and recorded by individual education plans

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has an individual care plan and a designated key worker. Day-to-day activity is outlined by the regularly reviewed in-house placement plan that evaluates the progress of the placement. All staff provide encouragement and practical support to assist young people achieve positive outcomes in the different

areas of their life.

Statutory reviews take place within specified timeframes and the progress young people make while in placement is being fully monitored. These review meetings are independently chaired and young people are always encouraged to attend them and express their views.

Young people are able to maintain appropriate contact with their families or other people who are significant in their lives. Case records confirm that this is taking place in a manner that is consistent with each placing authority's agreements and the agreed overall care plan. Young people can access advocates and persons independent of the home to represent their views and promote their rights.

Staff at the home understand that moving home can be very difficult for some young people and this awareness is used to provide support and reassurance when young people are in transition. Behavioural challenges at these times are taken into consideration and young people are sensitively assisted in settling in. Young people new to the home are encouraged to bring their own possessions so they can personalise their bedrooms. The home helps new arrivals to maintain any legitimate recreational interest they may have.

Staff successfully communicate with young people to ensure that their views, wishes and feelings are taken into account throughout the care planning process. Young people are actively encouraged to make suggestions about the service they receive and express an opinion about any aspects of their placement plans. They do this in one-to-one sessions with their key worker or collectively through young people's meetings. When being used as a single occupancy home young people have informal access to supervising staff at all times.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live on the periphery of the town in a rurally located home that is domestic in style, rustic in character, homely and adequately decorated. The home is furnished to a relatively good standard and provides young people with ample space for study, relaxation and recreation. Some areas have been subjected to harsh wear and tear during the recent transitions but these are systematically being repaired or replaced. Young people are encouraged to assist staff in this process which invites them to take more responsibility for the upkeep of their home.

Each young person has their own bedroom that may be individualised according to particular interests. The home provides a choice of shared bathrooms and toilets.

Vehicular and pedestrian access to the home is very poor because the shared un-metalled driveway is seriously damaged by agricultural vehicles and the frontage to the home is slippery when wet, posing some potential risk to residents and visitors.

Young people are taught how to keep themselves clean and appreciate the value of money when using their regular personal allowances. They can shop for and look after their own belongings with the assistance of staff.

Some young people are able to learn life skills by engaging with daily tasks involved with running the home, such as shopping, personal budgeting, cooking and undertaking some daily household chores with staff help. For older residents these tasks are incorporated into independence and pathway plans.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose for the home includes all information required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations, including details of the staffing complement deployed to look after young people at the home. Young people receive useful details about the home from an up to date children's guide.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who are thoroughly supported by their interim manager. A new manager's appointment is soon to take over this role. The absence of a designated deputy manager could however compromise the consistent running of the home when the manager is absent. Importance is placed by the present manager on regular staff supervision and appraisal of the workers to ensure the quality and consistency of day-to-day care. Staff develop their practice by having access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance which is enhanced by regular personal development and training opportunities.

The home has well established internal and independent quality monitoring systems that effectively highlight and address all aspects of the care being provided. These systems confirm the effectiveness of the home's management in safeguarding the welfare and interests and needs of the young people living there. The production of a development plan confirms the registered person's plans for the home by outlining future objectives.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive an individualised service in a home chosen to provide a package of care befitting age, ability and potential risk while not isolating young people from the broader community. All staff have a good knowledge of the particular young people they are working with, including their cultural and disability background, which helps ensure that specific needs may be addressed comprehensively and safely in this rural domestic setting. The home accesses explicit policies and procedures promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of their service for children from differing cultures and heritage.

Young people's individual case files are stored and arranged in a manner that is readily accessible to staff while maintaining administrative confidentiality. Young

people are made aware of the contents of their files and know they can request access to them should they need to.

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
26	ensure that the location and design of vehicular access and parking areas at the home minimise risk to young people Regulation 31(2)(d) (NMS 26.11).	23/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is an appropriate deputising arrangement in place (NMS 29.2)