

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 with challenging behaviour, aged between 10 and 17 years, although usually the home is used as a single occupancy unit. Admissions are planned with medium to long-term placements being accommodated. On this visit, only one young person was being looked after.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this unannounced interim inspection was to follow up on recommendations made at the last inspection and to assess key standards under the outcome area of staying safe. The home provides a good level of care to young people. The actions made at the last inspection are commented on in the improvement section of this report.

Changes to the home's management and occupancy coupled with improved safeguarding systems promote the wellbeing of the young people living at the home. Young people's behaviour is managed positively and their good behaviour is encouraged. Young people respond positively to consistent routines, staffing and the incentives used in the home which support them to develop acceptable social skills.

Young people make their views known through their behaviour and know that their views are listened to by their carers. The home environment is being well maintained apart from the young persons bathroom. Systems are in place to ensure appropriate health and safety checks are carried out.

At this inspection, only one action has been made.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last key inspection in October 2010 the registered person was required to ensure that the location and design of vehicular access and parking areas at the home minimise risk to young people. This requirement was reiterated following a safeguarding complaint and investigation in January 2011. The provider in conjunction with the property landlord have made the necessary improvements to both the vehicular access road and parking facilities at the home, thereby reducing the environmental risk to both young people and staff at the home.

All requirements arising from a safeguarding complaint made in January 2011 have

been fully addressed. The appointment of a new manager has been confirmed by an application being forwarded to the regulator.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Respect for the privacy of young people and for maintaining appropriate levels of administrative confidentiality are promoted by the home. Young people are kept informed when staff are required to share information about them with other professionals. They are provided with numerous opportunities to add comments to their daily records which allows them to express their views about issues that concern them and about living at the home generally.

Young people are provided with their own room. Their private space is respected although staff do help young people with tidiness and decoration to make this area homely and personalised. Young people are fully aware of the circumstances in which staff may ask to search their rooms. This process is fully recorded and young people are invited to add their comments. Young people have access to their own bathroom and toilet but this is in a poor condition.

All concerns or complaints made by young people are taken seriously, particularly if it is an allegation about staff practice. This is demonstrated by everyday issues and concerns being routinely discussed and addressed as part of the daily routine, frequently before they become a cause for complaint. When complaints are made they are looked into immediately by the acting manager. The registered provider has a clear and responsive complaints policy that is summarised in the young person's guide to the home and followed in practice. This adopts the requirements of the child protection policy, and outside agencies, including placing authority social workers, will be informed where necessary. Recorded evidence confirms that young people know how to complain and to whom they can address a complaint. They also have access to a visiting independent advocacy service and the monthly Regulation 33 visitor, should they require external help or support for discussing or making their concerns known. Improving relationships and developing trust between young people and their care staff are addressing the previous misuse of the home's complaints process.

The welfare and safety of young people living at the home is promoted by staff adhering to the practice policies produced by the registered provider. These formally 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. Training in this area is being reviewed to more effectively address concerns arising in residential settings. The registered provider makes available regular staff development opportunities to ensure that its employees are equipped and skilled to look after young people safely. The recently appointed Acting Manager is evaluating staff knowledge and competence to ensure consistent practice by the home across all safeguarding practice areas. 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.

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 unauthorised absences. Regular key worker meetings and a weekly children's meeting are used as forums for having the views of young people heard and recorded.

The management of behaviour is based on consistently encouraging and rewarding acceptable conduct. Explicit behavioural expectations and verbal praise help young people understand what is expected from them. Young people know what the rules of the home are. Staff understand and can identify the triggers for poor behaviour and help young people take control of these situations by providing explanations and suggesting alternative acceptable behavioural responses.

Lessons learned from serious incidents have influenced practice at the home. Residents numbers, individual care needs and thorough risk assessment control the home's staffing levels, ensuring that an appropriate and safe level of supervision for young people is always available.

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. All behavioural incidents and applied sanctions are reviewed by the home's acting manager. Young people are invited to discuss and have recorded their views after such interventions to help staff evaluate the safety, transparency and effectiveness of behaviour management practice in the home. Records identify a reduction in the need for physical intervention by staff.

The home uses risk assessments to evaluate all aspects of its practice and home safety. Risk assessments are taken into account when planning daily activities in the home and for all types of trips. All staff and young people know the fire safety instructions and there is an effective awareness of fire safety in the home. Fire drills are carried out regularly and detailed records are kept. The home has appropriate levels of insurance cover. Significant improvement has been made to the access road to the home and the condition of the hard standing for car parking. These have reduced the environmental risks identified by previous inspections.

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. The

acting 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 not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
24	ensure that the interior of the home is maintained in a good state of structural repair; this includes the bathroom and toilet used by young people. Regulation 31.2 (e) (NMS 24.3)	26/04/2011