

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	5 August 2010
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 February 2010
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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 is a small children's home catering for one young person, aged 12 - 17 years. It is a two bedroomed detached cottage-style property located in a rural setting. The layout of the home allows staff to quickly adjust the environment and the care being provided to respond to and meet the needs of the young people being accommodated.

Summary

This was a full unannounced key inspection. One young person is living in the home who was present during the inspection and actively 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 adapt to changing needs and is effective in addressing behaviour which promotes health and well-being. The home is well decorated and maintained providing a very homely environment in which young people are enabled to develop their interests and abilities. The registered person provides good direction and leadership to an enthusiastic, well-trained staff team thereby enabling a good quality of overall service. Staff are sufficient in number, clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the care needs of the young people they look after.

Only one recommendation is made by this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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 access to a menu that emphasises the importance of healthy eating. The relationship between diet and health is promoted by staff who receive training in food preparation. Staff encourage young people to assist in the preparation of meals by providing practical help and guidance.

Young people's health needs are carefully assessed prior to admission to the home to ensure that they can be met. A comprehensive health plan addresses specific needs. Good advice, guidance and support to promote personal hygiene and good health is provided through consultation with relevant professionals. These include health advisors, key workers, company therapists and the placing authority social worker.

Staff at the home maintain positive links with local health care professionals and always seeks informed advice for any health related concerns. The registered providers guidance and policies on health promotion for example regarding the use of drugs, alcohol, smoking and sexuality set a good reference point for staff consultation. All unhealthy behaviours are actively addressed by the health plan showing how young people's health is promoted.

The recording of all accidents, the use of prescribed and over the counter medication, including that for emergency treatment is clear. There is a robust medication policy in the home which complies with official advice and guidance. Storage of all medication is secure and in accordance with the company policies and guidance for ensuring safe practice. First aid arrangements in the home are underpinned by statutory staff training that covers minor accidents and health related emergencies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The registered person's policies and procedures promote and safeguard the welfare of young people living in the home. These policies have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements to enable good practice in areas of child protection, including countering bullying, effective behaviour management, dealing with missing persons and keeping young people safe. All staff have access to, and know the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board including how to recognise signs of child abuse. The registered provider commissions ongoing staff training to ensure that all staff are aware of how to competently and safely look after looked after young people.

The management of behaviour is based upon staff having a comprehensive knowledge of individual young people and by actively encouraging acceptable behaviour. Staffing levels are set at a level at which young people are able to be safely supervised. Young people are encouraged to discuss and maintain the standards of behaviour expected from them, thereby emulating normal social situations. Staff treat young people respectfully, always recognising and praising individual progress. This enables stability and good behaviour requiring the minimal use of sanctions or behavioural controls. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management including the safe and restricted application of physical restraint. Training in the approved restraint methodology is refreshed annually and all incidents are fully recorded and evaluated by the home's manager.

Young people's right for privacy is respected by their carers. High levels of confidentiality are maintained by sensitive personal information being carefully stored and discretely communicated with other professionals. Young people are provided with their own individual bedrooms and their own toilet and bathroom. Young people are aware that staff are required to discuss their progress in meetings as they are always invited to contribute their thoughts about the care they receive.

Any potential dangers to or risks to young people are actively evaluated by staff. Comprehensive risk assessments, that broadly cover all aspects of safety in the living environment, are compiled; for example the risk from fire and environmental hazards, those emerging from behaviour and recreational activities including trips out. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and take into account daily routines and any changes affecting the home such as staffing levels or alterations in the home's routine. Young people living in the home play a compliant part by responding to fire precautionary drills, including false alarms.

Care staff take seriously any concerns or complaints young people may have. This is demonstrated by any such matters being effectively addressed long before they become a complaint. Areas where young people may feel aggrieved, such as after a sanction are well recorded and always include opportunity for a young person's views to be noted. The home has an effective complaints policy that is summarised in the young person's guide. Young

people confirm that they know about this guide, how to complain and who they can complain to. They can also make their views heard through advocates, social workers and independent visitors who visit the home.

The home has a system for notifying significant people of notifiable events effecting children and young people. Shortfalls in the present recording format prevent effective monitoring of these notifications.

Young people are practically safeguarded by the provider's effective systems for the monitoring of all visitors to the home. No stranger is allowed access without an appointment and appropriate measures are in place to ensure protection. The registered provider's recruitment and selection process confirms that no staff start working with looked after children or young people ahead of all necessary suitability checks being completed. Personnel files were inspected ahead of this visit. Skeleton staff files retained in the home summarise that all staff working there have been appropriately checked for their suitability, qualification and experience.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

A well qualified and competent staff team promote young people's health and development. Being single occupancy, the home is successful in addressing the needs of young people who require consistent care and support, explicit behavioural boundaries, positive adult nurturing and the need to feel safe without peer group distractions.

Young people are supported to access a variety of in-house and community based activities that enhance their self-awareness, socialisation skills and general behaviour thereby improving trust and self-esteem. The manager and staff team educate young people's attitude and understanding of gender, diversity, acceptance and tolerance both within the home and the wider community. Staff address inappropriate behaviour towards social difference in an age-appropriate manner while taking into account the individual special needs of residents.

Young people receive access to services appropriate to their specific care and therapeutic needs from the registered provider's therapy team. With support from youth offences services young people are helped to address behaviours that bring them into conflict with society.

The young people's academic needs are promoted by receiving access to full-time education. This service is provided by the registered providers own school. Attendance is enhanced by the provision of transport and receipt of support in the educational setting by carers who offer consistent supervision. Education is provided within a national curriculum framework, which is amended to reflect each young person's ability and to accentuate achievement. Practice and social skills related activity is undertaken leading to Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. Personal education plans (PEP's) and individual education plans (IEP's) are produced to support the care plan.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Effective care planning is evidenced by focused plans that identify the purpose of the placement and how care plans will be progressed. Placement at this home is considered and recognises the specific risks of placement with peers against the possibility of loneliness in a rural setting.

Young people's case files confirm that progress is subject to regular review. Placing authorities are kept apprised of young people's progress in placement through the compilation of monthly, outcome focused reports. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details. These are regularly discussed at team meetings to confirm the accuracy and effectiveness of the care being provided and multi-agency concerns. Comprehensive, informative reports are produced to inform each looked after child (LAC) statutory review.

Meaningful contact with young people's families is supported by the home when this is approved by the placing authority care plan. They are practically supported on visits with the quality of contact interaction being recorded in placement plans and case file records, thereby ensuring young people are not put at risk.

Young people are expected to be involved with the decision making processes that affect the purpose and everyday running of the home. Key work sessions report upon individual young person related matters such as confidentiality, behavioural issues or how the young person's views may be best represented. Daily interactions between young people and staff confirm that this home is well able to provide a relaxed setting where care routines and the use of the environment is jointly discussed. These ideas maximise the placement potential, for example the current development of an outside storage area into an art and physical recreation room.

Staff team meeting minutes demonstrate that young people's issues are dealt with using a consistent, risk aware, child centred approach within clearly agreed parameters. Key worker session reports and the home's generic documentation confirm that staff provide realistic boundaries, are consistent and caring in their practice and actively promote young peoples welfare. Although new in placement early feedback is positive, judging behaviour and inspection comments about the care being provided.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Placement in this children's home takes full account of the child's age, ability and specific needs. When applicable these may help prepare children for any future transitions towards family living or independence. At all ages children are encouraged to develop their capacity to self-help and improve social skills. Children are taught how to keep themselves clean, practice budgeting with their regular personal allowances, shop and to look after their own belongings and clothes as a feature of their care routine. Children can also demonstrate their skills in the kitchen with help preparing and cooking snacks and meals.

The home is rurally located but within reasonable access of necessary amenities and recreational facilities. Transport is provided as a necessary part of the care placement.

The home is well maintained and kept very clean. Living rooms, kitchen-diner and sleeping areas are adequate in size, functional in appearance and well furnished. Children have ample personal space including their own personalised bedroom, bathroom and toilet. The home is being personalised by posters, artwork pictures and personal belongings confirming ownership and the young person's particular interests. The grounds are extensive and young people talk about developing a garden and keeping chickens.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose includes the information prescribed by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations. Both the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide have been revised since the change of placement occupancy to ensure that they provide accurate and up-to-date information about what services this home can provide.

Young people are well supported with every aspect of their everyday living by the enhanced team of well-qualified staff who are committed to providing safe and consistent and culturally sensitive care. The experienced and qualified home's manager and deputy provides staff with regular, well recorded supervision.

Staff further develop their practice by having access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance enhanced by formalised company training opportunities. Staff meetings confirm that any concerns or tasks are addressed quickly. Staff have attended all statutory training and additional courses that equips them to provide care designed to meet assessed and special needs in a focused manner.

The staff rota confirms that the increased complement of the home is as recorded by the Statement of Purpose. Shortfalls are covered by house staff or known staff from other of the organisation's homes that reduce the potential for disruption to care routines and levels of support being provided. The arrangement for safe work with young people is put into operation through regularly reviewed risk assessments.

The home adopts a formal process to regularly monitor the operational efficiency and quality of care being provided. The content of the in-house monitoring is informative, confirming that the manager and her team provide consistent care. Monthly monitoring takes place through the use of a Regulation 33 visitor to confirm operation within the scope of the home's Statement of Purpose. Whenever possible young people's views and comments contribute to this process and help to positively influence the service being provided. A development plan for the home confirms its continued operation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The recorded level of detail contained within young people's plans, case files and daily recording documents assure that staff are fully aware of the particular behavioural, communication and personal needs of the young person. In response, they have developed appropriate actions to fully address these needs and meet set outcomes. Although rurally isolated, the home's staff are active in ensuring that the young person experiences as wide a range of social and recreational experiences as possible while shaping behaviour to be socially acceptable.

The home is very well organised administratively. Individual case files are stored confidentially yet arranged in a manner that is familiar to the staff team. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and know they can request access to them.

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

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

- introduce a system to notify the persons and appropriate authorities of the occurrence of significant events in accordance with Regulation 30. (NMS 20.1)