

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 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 bed-roomed detached cottage style property located in a rural setting. The layout of the home allows staff to adjust the environment and the care provided to meet the needs of the young people accommodated.

Summary

This announced, full inspection of the children's home, looks at all of the key National Minimum Standards other than the staff recruitment process. The inspection focus is on areas related to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection further looks at how young people are consulted, how care is planned and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the home.

The home is judged as good. Young people receive individualised care that is consistently applied within a safely maintained environment. Access to education is important and encouraged by practical support provided from the home's care staff. Staff relate very well to young people and understand how to deal effectively with difficult and challenging behaviour.

The general organisation of working practices is strong and the home functions well. The manager provides effective direction and leadership to the staff team. This ensures that staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and understand how best to address the particular needs of young people in their care. The inspection identifies two administrative shortfalls that deter from evidencing how young people's needs are met.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered person was recommended to ensure that a record of staff training is retained on site to confirm the adequacy and competency of the staff team. This recommendation has been quickly acted upon thereby confirming improvement to the way in which the adequacy of staff is evidenced.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people can enjoy wholesome and varied meals that take account of individual preferences and their health needs. Staff provide various opportunities for young people to help plan and prepare their meals with encouragement and practical supervision. The ability to learn about and prepare meals is reinforced by the schools extra curricula activities through the medium of a competition.

The health needs of young people are carefully assessed prior to their admission, with action being taken by the home to ensure all particular needs can be accommodated. The home promotes positive links with local health care services and always seeks professional advice for any health related issues that may effect the young people. Health planning within the home has been especially effective, for example, by identifying a previously undiagnosed condition

of one young person. The home provides young people with sound advice, guidance and support to promote their healthy eating, personal safety and general health. This is achieved in consultation with health professionals, key workers and the placing authority.

The company provides staff working in its homes with guidance and clear policies about health promotion, for example, in relation to drugs, alcohol, smoking, being physically active and diet. Staff regularly promote the importance of a healthy, safe lifestyle to vulnerable young people.

The recording of all accidents, the use of prescribed and over the counter medication, and accessing emergency treatment is addressed thoroughly by the home. The medication policy complies with official advice and guidance. Storage of all medication is secure and its administration is in accordance with the home's safe practice policies and national guidance. First Aid arrangements are effective as staff receive regular training that equips them for dealing with most minor accidents and incidents.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The welfare and safety of young people is of paramount importance and promoted within the home by staff following established company policies. These have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas including: child protection and countering bullying, managing behaviour effectively, dealing with missing persons and safeguarding children. Staff have access to and know the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board's guidance which includes how to recognise signs of abuse. The company provide regular staff development and training to ensure that staff know how to look after children safely.

Staff at the home base their management of behaviour on a sound knowledge of young people and by the active encouragement of acceptable behaviour, generally with successful results. Young people are made aware of the standards of behaviour expected from them. These are discussed regularly and their compliance directly influences the homes routines. Staff always treat young people with positive regard and this is reflected by a relative low use of sanctions or behavioural controls. Staff receive regular training in managing behaviour which includes the safe use of physical restraint should it ever be required. Staff training is refreshed annually and all incidents are evaluated by the home's manager.

Staff at the home demonstrate a respect for young peoples right to privacy by maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality. In practice this is achieved by providing young people with their own bedrooms, by guarding any sensitive personal information and by being careful with how they communicate with other professionals about the young people being looked after.

An awareness of any potential dangers to young people is achieved by the compilation of a range of risk assessments that cover all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, the risk from fire, environmental hazards and those risks that emerge from challenging behaviour and recreational activities. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed to take into account daily tasks and any changes affecting the home such as change of staff or alterations in the home's routine. Young people respond sensibly to fire precautionary drills, however, their damage to some of the homes fire sensors may have temporarily compromised their safety.

Any concerns or complaints young people may have, from whatever source are taken seriously by the home. Most concerns are effectively addressed to young peoples satisfaction long before they become a complaint. The home has a clear and effective complaint procedure summarised in the revised young persons guide for the home. Young people are made aware of how to complain and who they can complain to. Young people are provided with access to an independent advocacy service that promotes their right to be heard either with complaints or should they go absent from the home.

To safeguard young people there are effective systems for the monitoring of all visitors to the home. No stranger is allowed access to the home without an appointment or safeguards being in place to ensure supervision. The company's recruitment and selection process as described by the manager confirms that no staff start working with young people before all necessary suitability checks have been completed. Staff personnel files have not been examined during this visit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are cared for by a competent staff team who demonstrate a good understanding and awareness of child health and development. The home demonstrates its competence in looking after young people who display elevated needs for consistency of support, explicit behavioural boundaries and positive adult nurturing whilst being encouraged to feel safe and protected in a warm, homely environment.

Young people are helped and supported to access both in-house and community based activities that will help to enhance their self-awareness, help them develop their own identity and improve their self-esteem in an age-appropriate manner. The manager and staff team actively try to promote young peoples positive awareness and understanding of gender, cultural diversity, acceptance and tolerance both within the home and the wider community.

Young people are provided with access to additional external services appropriate to their specific care and therapeutic needs. The care provider helps to promote young people's stability in placement by providing access to an in-house therapy team and being careful about the appropriate matching of young people with the home in which they are to live.

Young people have access to full-time education. This service is provided by the company's own off-site education provision. Attendance involves young people being transported and supported by their carers in the school setting to offer a consistency of care and support. Education is provided within a national curriculum framework that is individually adjusted to recognise young people's ability levels and thereby encourage personal achievement. Further practice and social skills related activity is undertaken by young people with the assistance of care staff that can lead to achieving Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) are drawn up to support the Care Plan description of the education being offered to children and young people. The absence of Individual Education Plans (IEP's) on the homes case files falls short of confirming that the individualised provision is adequate.

Staff help to promote young people's sense of enquiry and access to sport by accompanying them on educational and recreational visits. Effort is made to ensure that young people can be integrated into community events and are helped to access healthy recreational activities. The

home actively supports learning by providing access to a range of educational books and school based internet.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have a Placement Plan that identify what the home intends to achieve and how they will do it. Case files confirm that the young people have their progress regularly reviewed within prescribed periods. All staff help to record and update general progress reports. Monthly reports are completed by young peoples key workers and these are shared with placing authorities. Placement Plans include summarised Health and Education Plan details. All plans are internally reviewed by the staff team to ensure that they accurately convey the nature of care being provided and any changes deemed necessary.

Young people are practically helped to maintain contact with their families following the arrangements detailed within their care plans. Young people are transported and supported by staff wherever necessary to facilitate contact visits.

Young people are actively encouraged to be involved with the decision-making processes within the home. Key work sessions consider issues such as confidentiality and the role they have in keeping themselves safe. The daily interactions between staff and young people confirm that the home can provide a relaxed setting where behaviour and opinions can effectively influence the nature of the care provided or introduce greater controls to maintain everyone's safety. The young person's key worker sessions and the home's general records continue to support the view that staff provide realistic boundaries, are consistent in their practice and promote young peoples general welfare in a safe and positive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home provides young people with care based on age, ability and need. Where applicable to the Placement Plan this includes guidance and help to prepare young people for their eventual independence. At all ages young people are encouraged to develop their ability to help themselves and improve social and practical skills. Whenever practicable young people are encouraged with their personal hygiene, to practise budgeting with their regular personal allowances, to shop for and look after their own clothes and belongings as a feature of their care routine that engenders better self-esteem.

The cottage based home is well-maintained and comfortable in the communal areas but does present some space where deliberate damage has been inflicted that cannot be speedily repaired. The home is rurally located while having reasonable access of all necessary amenities and recreational facilities. A fully maintained company vehicle is provided as a vital component of the placement. The home is usually tidy and kept clean. Living rooms and the kitchen are adequate in size, homely in appearance and well furnished. Young people have ample personal space including their own bedroom as the home is a single occupancy placement. The young person's private space shows some sign of being deliberately damaged. The home is personalised by posters, photographs, certificates and personal belongings confirming ownership and evidence of the young person's particular interests.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people are well supported with their everyday living by a team of competent, trained staff who know the young people well and are committed to providing safe and consistent care. The experienced and qualified registered manager supports her staff with regular supervision and by encouraging their access to professional development. Staff have attended all statutory training and additional courses to help them provide care designed to meet the particular and individual needs of young people. The level of senior management support for the home or its manager is not confirmed by either regular visiting frequency or adequate recording within this particular home.

The 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 provide accurate information about what services the company and children's home provide.

The home is adequately staffed with the daily rota confirming that the complement is as detailed within the home's Statement of Purpose. Any staffing shortfalls are covered by in-house staff or known staff from other company homes, thereby reducing any potential for disruption to the care routine and levels of support being provided. The arrangement for safe one to one work with young people is fully addressed by the homes risk assessments, but remain subject to constant staff review to ensure all party's safety at all times. Staff develop their practice by reference to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance supported by training opportunities.

There are established processes that confirm monitoring of the operational efficiency and quality of care being provided by the home. In-house monitoring is good, confirming that the manager and her team promote consistent practice and look for ways in which they can improve their service. Monthly monitoring takes place through the use of a regulation 33 visitor. Feedback from young people contribute to this process and is thought to be critical for informing service development.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The particular detail in the young people's plans, case files and daily recording documents identify that staff know of particular differences and how, in response, they can develop their practice to fully support the range of developmental and cultural needs.

The home is well organised. Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and arranged in a manner that is familiar to all of the staff team. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and know that they may request access to them. They are encouraged to contribute to many of the homes reporting formats.

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
28	suitable arrangements must exist for the professional supervision of the registered person of the home. Reg 27(4)(a) National Minimum standard 28.5	6 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a copy of the young persons Personal Education Plan (including Individual Education Plan) is included in the child's case file. National Minimum Standard 14.1