

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 that looks after one young person, aged between 10 and 18 years. It is a two-storey, detached property, in a rural setting. The nature of the home allows staff to adjust the environment and the care provided to meet the specific needs of the children and young people accommodated. The priority for staff is to 'provide a safe, warm, nurturing and empowering environment to afford children and young people the care and control to which they are entitled at this stage in their life'.

Summary

This announced, full inspection looks at all of the key national minimum standards within the Every Child Matters outcome areas. 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 the current staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the home.

The home is judged as good with some outstanding areas of practice. Children receive considered, individualised care that is consistently applied while being sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing needs. Access to education is given importance and practically promoted by care staff support. Staff relate very well to children who in turn speak positively about and positively contribute to the home in which they live. The home experiences relatively few behavioural challenges as a result.

The organisation of working practices is robust and the home functions well. The current acting manager provides effective direction, leadership and support to the staff team. This ensures that staff are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and understand the particular needs of children in their care.

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 it was recommended that the home retain a copy of staff training records on site. This recommendation has been acted upon and provides an improvement to the way in which the provider can evidence the adequacy and competence of staff looking after vulnerable children.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children influence their meal choice and enjoy healthy and balanced meals that take account of their individual preferences and medical conditions. Staff always provide the opportunity for children to help prepare their meals with practical guidance and supervision.

The health needs of children are carefully assessed prior to a child's admission to ensure these can be well met. The home prepares a comprehensive health plan that addresses the specific needs of the child, for example detailed medical information is requested from placing authorities relating to the management of pre-existing medical conditions. The home provides children

with good advice, guidance and support to promote healthy eating, personal safety and good health. This is achieved through consultation with relevant professionals including health advisors, key workers and the placing authority social worker.

Staff at the home maintain positive links with local health care professionals and always seeks professional advice for any health related issues that may concern the children being looked after. The company provides guidance and policies on health promotion for example regarding the use of drugs, alcohol, smoking and sexuality. Staff emphasize the importance of a healthy lifestyle for children while encouraging self awareness about individual health and medical needs.

The recording of all accidents, the use of prescribed and over the counter medication, including for emergency treatment are all very good. There is a clear 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 remain suitable with staff receiving regular training that prepares them to address confidently minor accidents or health related emergencies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Adherence to company policies and practice helps ensure that the safety and welfare of children living in the home are promoted. These policies have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection, including countering bullying, effective behaviour management, dealing with missing persons and safeguarding children. All staff have access to, and know the requirements of, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board including how to recognise signs of abuse. The company provides regular staff training to ensure that all staff will look after children safely.

Staff base their management of behaviour on their comprehensive knowledge of individual children and by the effective encouragement of acceptable behaviour. Children know and actively discuss with their carers the standards of behaviour expected from them. Staff always treat children with respect and positive regard and this is reflected by good behaviour and a minimal need for the use of sanctions or behavioural controls. Staff receive suitable training in behaviour management which includes the safe and restricted use of physical restraint should it be required. Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) training is refreshed annually and all incidents are recorded and evaluated by the home's manager.

Staff demonstrate a respect for the right to privacy of children by maintaining high levels of confidentiality, practically by providing young people with their own en-suite equipped bedrooms, by protecting sensitive personal information and by being careful with how they communicate about children with other professionals. Children know that staff discuss their care in meetings because they are invited to contribute any issues or thoughts they may have.

The children's home confirms its awareness of potential dangers to residents by producing a range of risk assessments that broadly cover all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example the risk from fire and environmental hazards, those emerging from behaviour and recreational activities including trips. 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. Children living in the home play a compliant part by always responding to fire precautionary drills, even for false alarms.

Staff take seriously any issues or complaints children may have. This is demonstrated by most concerns being effectively addressed long before they become a complaint. Areas where children may feel aggrieved, such as after a sanction, are well recorded and always include opportunity for children's views to be noted. The home has an effective complaint policy that is summarised in the young person's guide for the home. Children confirm that they know how to complain and who they can complain to. Children can also make their views heard through advocates who will visit the home.

To further safeguard children and young people there are in place effective systems for the monitoring of all visitors to the home. No stranger is allowed access without an appointment and appropriate safeguards being in place to ensure children's protection. The service's recruitment and selection process, as described by the manager, asserts that no staff start working with looked after children ahead of all necessary suitability checks being completed. Personnel files were not inspected during this visit as they are maintained at the company head office however skeleton staff files retained in the home summarise that all staff working there have been appropriately checked for suitability.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by a well qualified and competent staff team who demonstrate a good understanding of child health and development. The home is successful in looking after younger children who have specific needs for: consistency of support, explicit behavioural boundaries and positive adult nurturing whilst being encouraged to feel safe and protected in a homely environment. The home is competent in providing these.

To develop confidence and practical abilities children are helped and supported to access a variety of in-house and community based activities that can enhance their self-awareness, help develop identity and improve their self-esteem in an age-appropriate manner. The manager and staff team promote the children's positive awareness of gender, diversity, acceptance and tolerance both within the home and the wider community by challenging inappropriate attitudes towards social difference.

Children receive additional external services appropriate to their specific care and therapeutic needs from a range of professional sources to promote the achievement of their care plan. The organisation helps promote a child's stability in placement by providing access to a company based therapy team.

Children and young people living at the home receive full-time education. This service is provided by the company school. Attendance involves children being transported and supported by their carers in the educational setting to offer ongoing consistency of supervision. Education is provided within a national curriculum framework, but amended to reflect young people's ability levels and thereby encourage achievement. Further practice and social skills related activity is undertaken by children with care staff assistance leading to achieving Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) qualifications. Personal Education Plans (PEP's) and Individual Education Plans (IEP's) support the care plan description of the education being offered to children and young people however these are not current. The home celebrates

children's accomplishments in school by prominently displaying education related certificates of achievement.

Staff from the home help to promote children's sense of inquiry by accompanying them on educational visits during school holidays and ensuring that the home is adorned with posters encouraging academic interest to strengthen informal as well as structured learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Care planning for children by the home is effective because placement plans, that identify the purpose of the placement and how the placing authority's care plan will be progressed, are in place and kept up to date. Children's case files confirm that their progress is regularly reviewed in a timely manner. Staff attend regular in-house meetings to record and update records of the child's general progress. Monthly reports are completed by key workers and chronological reports are prepared to inform placing authorities. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details. All plans are discussed by the staff team regularly to ensure that they accurately reflect the care being provided and any changes deemed necessary. Thorough and informative reports are compiled by staff from the home to inform each Looked After Child (LAC) statutory review.

Wherever appropriate children are supported to maintain meaningful contact with their families. Children are practically supported by staff during such visits and arrangements are made for siblings to visit the children's home. Placement plans and supportive case file records make explicit the authorised arrangements for contact between children, family members, friends and other professional workers such as social workers.

The home's records confirm that children are actively involved with the decision making processes when considering issues that affect the running of the home. Well recorded key work sessions consider individual child related matters such as confidentiality or how children's views may be best represented. Daily interactions between staff and children confirm that this home provides a relaxed setting where practical involvement by children with staff effectively shapes the care provided and the environment in which it is delivered.

The record of staff team meetings demonstrate that children's issues are dealt with using a consistent, risk aware, child centred approach within clearly agreed parameters. The young person's key worker sessions and the home's generic records confirm that staff provide realistic boundaries, are consistent and caring in their practice and actively promote children's welfare.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The care provided by the children's home takes full account of the child's on age, ability and specific needs. Where 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 by preparing and cooking snacks and meals.

The home is well maintained and comfortable but idiosyncratic in its décor and layout. Children and staff are voluntarily working together to enhance its appearance and décor to better reflect their needs. 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 and sleeping areas are adequate in size, functional in appearance and well furnished. Children have ample personal space including their own en-suite equipped bedroom. The home is personalised by posters, photographs, certificates and personal belongings confirming ownership and the child's particular interests.

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 to ensure that they provide accurate and up-to-date information about what services the home can provide.

Children are well supported with every aspect of their everyday living by a team of competent, well-qualified staff who are committed to providing safe and consistent care. The agreed interim arrangements for the home's management are very effective. The experienced and qualified home's acting manager ably supports her staff with regular supervision and providing ongoing access to professional training.

Staff are supported to develop their practice by access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance enhanced by formalised company training opportunities. Staff supervision is regular and well recorded. Staff meetings confirm that any concerns or tasks are addressed quickly. Staff have attended all statutory training and additional courses to equip them to provide care designed to meet assessed needs in a child focused manner.

The staff rota confirms that the complement of the home is as identified by the revised home's 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 one to one work with children are fully addressed by risk assessments while remaining subject to constant review to confirm children's safety.

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 good, 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 homes Statement of Purpose. Feedback from children importantly contributes to this process and helps to positively influence the service being provided. The development plan for the home confirms its continued operation and objectives for improvement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The recorded level of detail in the children's plans, case files and daily recording documents identify that staff are aware of the particular needs the child has and how, in response, they have developed appropriate actions to fully support these personal needs. 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 his behaviour to be tolerant of all people's differences.

The home is administratively very well organised. Children's individual case files are confidentially stored and arranged in a manner that is familiar to the staff team. Children 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):

- ensure that each case file includes an up to date copy of their Personal Education Plan (national Minimum Standard 14.2)