

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 small children's home is registered to provide care for up to two young people of either gender, aged between 10 and 17 years. The home's location is within easy reach of the local main town centre and convenient for access to nearby leisure and company educational facilities, while being discretely situated away from neighbouring properties. The home offers spacious accommodation in a four-bedroom detached property where each young person has their own room. The home has lounge space, a large kitchen/dining room, bathrooms on each floor and a staff office. A large garden and detached garage that houses leisure equipment provides additional functional space that enhances the property's suitability as a children's home.

There have been several changes to the day to day management of this home over the past 12 months.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection that concentrated on all of the key national minimum standards.

The inspection focused on the Every Child Matters outcome areas related to being healthy, safeguarding and recreation, how young people are enabled to enjoy and achieve, relationships between young people and their carers, the competence of staff and their management and the general standards of the accommodation in which the service is provided.

At the time of the inspection two young people were living at the home, one of whom has only recently been admitted. Both young people made some contribution to the inspection findings. The home is presently being efficiently overseen by an acting manager. Care staff are well supported and demonstrate confidence addressing each resident young person's needs. Young people are well looked after and kept safe.

The action and recommendations arising from this inspection refer to a formalising transition plans with placing authorities and ensuring that remedial works to the fabric of the building are addressed quickly.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered provider was asked to make improvements to ensure young people have up to date health plans to confirm how their needs are being met; that records were kept confirming that the home fully complies with fire regulations by conducting regular fire drills and evacuations and that individual case files for young people contain all required detail and are similar in their format. The registered person and acting manager have satisfactorily addressed all of these requirements. Additional recommended improvements have been addressed confirming the home's compliance with the recommendations for electrical retesting of portable electrical equipment and the thoroughness of Regulation 33 reports.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

An awareness of healthy eating and the importance of a balanced diet is promoted with young people living at the home. Individual preferences are assimilated into the home's weekly menus and mealtime arrangements. Young people are introduced to self-help skills as part of their daily routine. Menu planning is inclusive offering a broad range of dishes including, wherever possible, those from different cultures.

The health needs of young people are effectively addressed by staff following the company policies that promote health and well-being. Young people are able to access healthcare in a timely manner from local health practitioners. Individual care plans contain details relating to specific health needs and areas where the involvement of other professionals, such as child and adolescent mental health service is desirable.

Case records confirm that young people's health is actively monitored and promoted by staff at the home. The home uses a medication policy which includes appropriate procedures and practice guidance for staff. Medication is safely stored in a wall mounted lockable cabinet in the staff office.

First Aid arrangements in the home are good and staff receive regular training that equips them to deal with minor accidents or ailments if they happen.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The right to privacy for young people is demonstrated, practically by the provision of individual bedrooms and their own bathroom. Sensitive personal information about young people is protected through staff training about confidentiality and caution being employed when they communicate with other professionals.

All concerns or complaints made by young people living at the home are regarded seriously by care staff. Concerns are effectively addressed before they become a

complaint. The home has a clear complaints policy and the procedures in place are effective. The policy is made known to young people by being summarised in their guide to the home. Young people confirm that they know how to complain and who they can complain to. They are provided with access to an independent advocate should they require help or support to make any concern they may have known. All complaints arising about the home itself are addressed by the home's manager even if this concerns other resident children.

The safety and welfare of young people living at the home is promoted by the registered person's policies. These have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection that include countering bullying, effective behaviour management and safeguarding children. Care staff have access to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures and their training informs them how to recognise and report practice concerns or signs of abuse.

Staff base their management of behaviour on the active encouragement of acceptable behaviour, by providing consistent expectations and by regularly praising positive behaviour. Young people confirm that the standards of behaviour expected from them are understood by their cooperation with staff requests. Staff treat the young people respectfully and this is evidenced by improved behaviour and a minimal need for the use of sanctions or behavioural controls. Staff are trained in management of challenging behaviour which includes the safe use of physical restraint using an approved methodology. The views and opinions of young people are sought as an integral part of this process to improve the transparency and inform the effectiveness of staff practice.

The home demonstrates its awareness of potential dangers to young people being looked after by producing a range of risk assessments for all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, the risk from fire and hazards, or from young people's behaviour including those during recreational activities. To remain effective these assessments are reviewed regularly and take into account daily tasks and any changes affecting the home such as staffing levels or any changes of resident. Young people presently living in the home take fire safety seriously and play a compliant part in responding to fire precautionary drills.

The home has vigilant procedures in place for monitoring all visitors to the home. No unauthorised person can access the building or have unsupervised access to the young people living there. The main staff personnel files were inspected as a collective exercise ahead of this inspection as they are held centrally at the company head office. The manager confirmed that no staff started working with children ahead of all statutory checks being completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people living at the home are fully supported by care staff who all take responsibility for the safe delivery and monitoring of care plans. Improvements in

behaviour confirm that relationships between staff and young people are positive and are helping to improve esteem and socialisation.

Positive interpersonal relationships support general health and well-being, special interests and any expressed religious or cultural needs. The staff team promote the involvement for young people in interests and activities outside of the home where these are assessed as safe and appropriate. Young people's understanding of their behaviour can be assisted if they choose to access the services of qualified therapists employed by the registered provider.

Age appropriate education is promoted by the registered provider's education policy and the home's commitment to ensuring young people have supported access to realistic opportunities. Practical access to learning is considered before a young person joins the home. Education is provided by one of the registered person's schools which tailors the individual curriculum to suit the young person's academic abilities and interests. Young people are accompanied and supported throughout their school day by residential staff working in partnership with teachers to ensure learning is promoted. Educational needs are specifically addressed and recorded by in-house individual education plans and personal education plans.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have individual care plans and an allocated key worker. Their placement plan evaluates all aspects of daily living and the purpose and aims of the placement. All care staff provide encouragement and practical support to assist young people achieve positive outcomes in the different areas of their life and progress is recorded.

Statutory reviews take place and the progress of young people is fully monitored. Review meetings are independently chaired and young people are always encouraged to attend to express their views whenever they feel able.

Young people are enabled 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 young person's placing authority's agreements and the overall care plans. Young people can have access to advocates and persons independent of the home to represent their views and promote their rights.

Care staff fully understand that moving home can be very difficult for some young people and this awareness has been effectively used to provide support and reassurance to prepare young people for this transition. Young people new to the home have been practically encouraged to bring their own possessions and personalise their bedrooms ahead of their admission. They said that this has been helpful for them when settling in.

Staff at the home communicate at all levels 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 and express their views about aspects of their placement plans and their day-to-day life at the home. They do this in one-to-one sessions with their key worker or collectively through young people's meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people live in a large detached urban that is discretely separated from its neighbours. The home is domestic in style, homely and generally well decorated and maintained although some areas, such as the bathroom, have been identified by the manager as being in need of attention. This work should be completed in the shortest possible time to ensure that young people continue to live in accommodation that is well maintained.

The home is furnished to a good standard and provides young people with ample space for study, relaxation and recreation. The garden space is extensive providing both hard and soft areas for activity. Young people have their own bedrooms that have been individualised according to particular interests and preference. The home provides a choice of bathrooms and toilets. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the home is good and there is safe parking for a number of vehicles.

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

Relevant life skills are being taught to young people through daily participation with the tasks involved with running the home, such as shopping, personal budgeting, cooking and undertaking some daily household chores with staff help. One young person has been involved in painting and decorating his bedroom to a good standard. These practical tasks are incorporated into their placement plans currently confirming that young people show a willingness to actively engage in planning for the future. This planning must be incorporated into a formal transition plan that is consistent with a pathway plan generated by their placing authorities.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose for the home includes all information required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations 2001, 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 amended children's guide.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who are thoroughly

supported by the acting manager assigned to the home and her deputy. The registered provider is presently reviewing the permanent management arrangements for the home. Importance is placed by the present manager on regular staff supervision and regular appraisal of staff to ensure the quality and consistency of day-to-day care. Care staff develop their practice by being assertively managed, by having access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance and access to regular personal development and training opportunities.

The home has internal and independent quality monitoring systems that effectively highlight and address all aspects of the care being provided by the home. These systems underline the effectiveness of the home's management in safeguarding the welfare and interests and differing needs of the young people living there. The performance and effectiveness of the home has improved significantly since the last inspection. The production of a development plan confirms the registered person's commitment by outlining the home's future objectives.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive an individualised service in a home that provides a package of care that recognises need, age, ability and potential risk while not isolating young people from the broader community. All staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the young people they are working with, including their cultural and disability background, which helps ensure that holistic needs are being addressed as far as is possible in this domestic setting. The home utilises policies and procedures promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of the registered person's service for young people of differing ability, culture and heritage.

Young people's individual case files are stored and arranged in a manner that makes them readily accessible to staff while maintaining confidentiality. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and are regularly invited to sign some of their daily records. They know they can request access to their case files 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
6	ensure that young people are provided with a transition plan that is consistent with the placing authorities pathway plan. (Regulation 12) national minimum standard 6.2	06/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the home's maintenance routines ensure damage to the property is repaired at the earliest possible opportunity. (national minimum standard 24.3)