

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Heather Chaplin
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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

The home is a large detached property situated about half a mile from a small village. It is in a semi-rural location but convenient for rail and motorway networks. There are education, sports and leisure facilities nearby, with easy access to open countryside, local attractions and the coast.

On the ground floor, there is a lounge, with a dining area and a conservatory. There is a kitchen and utility room with laundry facilities. A second lounge is used for recreation or relaxation.

On the first floor there are single bedrooms to accommodate up to three young people. There are facilities for staff sleeping in, and a staff office. The home has two bathrooms, each equipped with a bath and a shower. Outside, there are gardens all around the property, with a gravel parking area and space for activities or play.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an announced full inspection, with short notice given. The Registered Manager was present, together with staff and one young person. This young person took an active part in the inspection; the other young person was out fishing.

This was a positive inspection, with the exception of specific issues described below. The home is well-run, clean and homely. Young people receive very good quality individual care. Paperwork systems are effective and health care needs are met very well. Management monitoring and staff qualifications are also sound. Consequently, four of the six outcome areas are rated good.

Staying Safe is rated satisfactory because there is a major issue with the levels of control imposed on some young people in the home. The four actions made in this report are all related to this issue. One recommendation has been made in respect of medical authorisation for the use of homely remedies.

Staying Safe is a limiting judgement making Organisation and the overall rating for the home also satisfactory.

Improvements since the last inspection

There was one recommendation at the last inspection, in relation to the Registered Manager's qualifications. Very good progress has been made. The Registered

Manager is now well on her way to completing her National Vocational Qualification at level 4 (NVQ 4) in Leadership and Management.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home has done very well to achieve progress with some young people who have, historically, found it difficult to eat a healthy diet. Staff encourage the consumption of fruit and vegetables and use creative means, including fruit smoothies, to ensure that this happens. Other young people eat a wide range of healthy foods and are able to cook for themselves.

Health care planning is of a high standard in this home. One newly admitted young person does not yet have a health care plan because this is under construction. However, there is still plenty of information on file to guide the staff. Individual issues are clearly identified, with strategies in place to help staff to monitor and respond to any healthcare needs. All young people are registered with local healthcare professionals and can access more specialised medical advice if necessary.

Medicines are kept in a locked safe and there are effective systems in place to record their entry into the home, their administration and disposal. The medicines are kept in separate plastic boxes for each young person. These boxes were not labelled, but the Registered Manager remedied this immediately.

Medicines are managed safely and systematically. There is a controlled drugs book in place, but no controlled drugs are currently in use. Medicines seen were all in date and stored appropriately.

The home does not yet have a list of approved homely remedies signed by their medical practitioner.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Many aspects of this outcome area are good, with some outstanding features. However, there are significant shortfalls in relation to restrictions of liberty. Although these measures are in place to safeguard young people, they are not permitted within the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. This has resulted in actions being made. Consequently, this outcome area is rated satisfactory.

The home has effective policies and procedures in place for complaints, the prevention of bullying and for safeguarding. The complaints procedure is included in the children's guide and incorporates the contact details of organisations that may help young people. The complaints log is well recorded, with two complaints received since the last inspection. Both have been addressed in a fair and balanced manner.

Staff receive good quality training in the prevention of bullying. The company takes a strong anti-bullying stance at all times. Bullying is not currently an issue in this home.

Staff also receive effective training in safeguarding and child protection. The Registered Manager explained that she works through a safeguarding pack with individual staff. This ensures that they understand how to respond in the event of any disclosure. Staff may also access the Local Safeguarding Children Board website online, to read the current locally-agreed child protection procedures.

The home has submitted appropriate notifications to Ofsted under Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Guided by clear individual risk assessments, staff are aware of how to respond if young people go absent without authority. If this occurs, the police are involved and the home works with them to help bring the young person back safely.

The company achieves excellence in the quality of their recruitment process. Criminal Records Bureau certificates are renewed on a three yearly basis. A minimum of two references are obtained. Sometimes three or four references are requested, if the applicant has had a number of jobs involving working with young people. Staff files are well-ordered and maintained to a very high standard.

The company constantly strives towards excellence in care and takes safeguarding very seriously. Some effective strategies are in place to help protect young people from risk of harm. Physical intervention is a last resort, conducted only by fully trained staff. The restraint log is very well-recorded and shows that physical intervention has, in practice, been used appropriately to prevent immediate harm.

However, one young person has risk management strategies in place which specify that they can be restrained to prevent them from leaving the premises, without specifying any immediate harm element. This is reflected in the home's Statement of Purpose. This strategy is said to have been given verbal approval by the parents and the placing authority. However, it is contrary to Department for Education guidance.

From observations and discussions, it became clear that external doors are locked day and night to prevent young people from going absent without authority. This has implications for fire safety as well as being a restriction of liberty.

Some young people's first floor bedroom windows are locked, even though the windows are already fitted with restrictors. Most of the furniture and all spare clothing has been removed from one young person's bedroom, supposedly for their own protection. These actions impact on young people's privacy and dignity and are not an effective strategy, because young people can still use clothing or other items in the home to harm themselves.

The lock has been removed a bedroom door to ensure that staff can gain entry to the room in an emergency. This has not prevented them from barricading themselves in, so again, it is not an effective measure. It has also created another

problem in that, with no door alarms in place, there is now nothing to stop other people from entering this young person's bedroom without their consent.

High level staff monitoring is in place to help ensure that young people are safe, but this stops at night after staff have gone to bed. It is unclear what purpose this level of daytime monitoring is achieving, if there are no waking night staff.

The situation was discussed with the Registered Manager and with the Provider. The Provider emphasised that there are sound safeguarding principles behind all these actions, but she agreed that they had not been fully thought through. She was unaware that doors were being locked routinely. The intention had been that this should only be done in response to an immediate incident. She stated that she would visit the home within 24 hours to review these arrangements and provide support to the manager.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff work hard to meet individual young people's needs. Young people interviewed have not yet settled in the home, but it is clear that this is no reflection on the quality of care or accommodation on offer. There is a keyworker system in operation, with regular one to one sessions to encourage young people to talk about their wishes and needs.

One young person is not in education at present, but there is a clear plan in place to address this. Another young person is being very well supported to gain a place on a mechanics course at college. Staff have worked very hard to help them to make this transition.

The home achieves excellent outcomes for young people in terms of their activities. Staff spend lots of quality time with young people and attempt to discover their interests. Current activities include fishing, go-karting, car shows, adventure parks and visiting animal petting farms. The company has a caravan on the coast and takes young people there for short breaks. This gives them the opportunity to enjoy a short holiday away from the home, which is good practice.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

In light of the restriction and control issues identified above, discussion took place about whether young people who require such extreme measures are appropriately placed in this home. The Provider is of the opinion that the home has a great deal to offer these young people, as the staff are able to provide a supportive and nurturing environment. The inspector is aware that other young people have made very good progress in this home, and only time will tell whether the decision to admit this

particular young person was the right one. Therefore no action has been made in relation to appropriateness of placements.

Regulation 33 reports have identified past issues with the quality of recording, but it is clear that the Registered Manager has addressed this very effectively. Current recording is good, with some gaps in documentation whilst the home is waiting for the first review to take place. The placement plan for a young person recently admitted to the home is under construction, but there is plenty of information on the file to enable staff to look after her.

Other young people's files have been inspected on previous occasions and are complete. Each young person has their own journal. This is recorded very well and can be shown to young people if they request this. Young people in this home receive regular statutory reviews of their care needs.

One young person had a visitor from their home area during the inspection. This person was welcomed and made to feel at home in the smaller lounge, which provides a warm and homely space for contact meetings. The young person commented that it had been really nice to see their visitor. Contact plans are well recorded and are in line with the placing authority's wishes.

Young people are able to visit the home before placement. They are given the children's guide and shown around the home. They can stay for a meal if they wish to do so. Sometimes, the home is asked to take emergency placements. The company expects as much documentation as possible before an emergency placement is accepted. A full assessment is done before arrival to determine whether or not the proposed placement will cause difficulty for young people who are already resident. When the time comes for young people to move on, this is handled as sensitively as possible.

Regulation 33 visit reports show that all young people in the home are now offered the opportunity to meet regularly to discuss any issues they may have. Not all young people find this an easy process and prefer to speak with staff individually. Young people's journals show that they are consulted about their likes and dislikes, menu choices and other matters relating to their daily lives.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Some young people in the home are progressing very well on semi-independence programmes. The Registered Manager uses a comprehensive and adaptable life skills checklist to help young people prepare for independence.

Young people receive regular pocket money. This is well recorded and managed according to their individual needs. Some young people are working on a financial incentive scheme. For example, additional pocket money can be earned by reaching their personal behavioural targets.

The home is situated in a pleasant, attractive house in a quiet rural lane. It has the advantage of being very close to a large city, with excellent rail and road networks, which enable social workers, family and friends to visit easily. The home provides well designed accommodation for young people and staff. There is plenty of parking and a large garden where young people can engage in outdoor activities. The home is within easy reach of sports facilities, open countryside and beaches.

Recently redecorated, the home generally provides a pleasant and homely environment for young people. The Registered Manager explained that staff had worked very hard to make good some damage caused by a previous occupant. She is well aware of areas where further work is required and overall, the quality of the decorations, furniture and fittings is good.

Some young people's rooms are welcoming, relaxing and have been nicely personalised. Some young people have insufficient furniture in the room to meet the National Minimum Standards. This has been discussed above, under Staying Safe.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which is regularly updated. This document meets all the requirements of schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Some excellent work has taken place in terms of meeting individual educational and career needs. The company has a very strong ethos of equality and anti-discriminatory practice; in particular, in terms of gender equality. Gender balance in the staff group has been adjusted to allow for the admission of a young woman. There is always a female staff member on each shift.

There are sufficient qualified staff in the home to meet young people's needs. Over the past year, the company has made determined and sustained progress in enabling staff to achieve their qualifications. Most staff now hold NVQ 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. One member of staff is embarking on NVQ 4, which is good practice in terms of staff development.

The company provides a comprehensive staff induction programme. Training is provided by well-qualified and experienced senior managers. This includes food hygiene, physical intervention, child protection, health and safety and first aid.

Regulation 33 reports are of a high standard. They are sent regularly to Ofsted and provide a robust audit of the home's performance. Suitable actions are specified, which are always followed up at the next visit. Management monitoring is effective and well recorded. There are sound systems in place to ensure the proper running of the home, with very positive, direct support from the senior management team.

The Registered Manager is already halfway through her NVQ 4 in Leadership and Management. This is very good progress in seven months, particularly as for much of that time, the manager was registered for two homes. At present, she is registered solely for this setting. Since her registration, the manager has worked hard to bring about significant positive changes.

Young people's files are in good order and kept securely in a locked office. The required documentation is on file for all young people who are established in their placements. Any missing care planning documents relating to new placements are followed up with the placing authorities concerned.

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
9	ensure that young people's sleeping accommodation is private and that bedrooms are equipped with furniture suitable to their needs; in particular, furniture is returned to young people's bedrooms to meet NMS 24 (Regulation 31 (8))	30/11/2010
22	ensure that staff do not exceed the measures that they can take, under current legislation and government guidance, to prevent a child from leaving the home without permission (Regulation 17(1))	30/11/2010
26	ensure that all parts of the children's home are adequately ventilated (Regulation 31 (2) (a))	30/11/2010
2	ensure the the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of all children accommodated there; in particular: ensure that young people have access to their clothing at all times and that any monitoring measures are consistent. (Regulation 11(1) and (2))	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- obtain written medical or nursing advice on the most appropriate non-prescription medicines to use in the home. (NMS 13.11)