

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Deirdra Keating
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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 children's home, owned by a private company, provides care and accommodation for up to three young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, aged between 10 and 17 years.

The home is a detached property with surrounding gardens. It is situated on the outskirts of a rural village within reach of nearby towns and local amenities. Each young person has their own bedroom, and a number of communal areas are provided for recreational activities. Separate facilities are provided for staff, together with office space.

The ground floor houses a lounge, with satellite television, kitchen diner and games room. There are education facilities in the grounds. Three young people currently live in the home, all of whom were present during the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced inspection all key standards were inspected. This is a good service overall with many strong features. Young people are actively encouraged to eat well and take exercise to promote healthy lifestyles. Their independence is encouraged well to support them into adulthood. There are good relationships between young people, their peers and staff, and this enhances their welfare.

Staff are supported well by the manager, who has a clear focus on improvement and is strongly committed to the service and facilitating the best outcomes for young people. The staff work well with families and outside agencies in order to meet the range of young people's needs.

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Manager was asked to ensure that the record of physical restraint included more information. This record has been changed to ensure that all requirements are recorded in line with the regulations. The Registered Manager was also asked to ensure that staff responsible for leading shifts had relevant experience of working in the home. The home works on a rota that ensures all senior staff are suitably experienced and qualified.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy a varied and balanced diet of home-cooked food. This is generally prepared and cooked by the housekeeper who uses fresh local ingredients where possible. The promotion of healthy structured meal times is given a high priority in the home. Young people are strongly encouraged to eat at the table with staff and gain the benefits of regular social meal times. The young people are involved in the planning of menus and also cook for the house which helps them develop skills for more independent living in the future. Fresh fruit and drinks are freely available for young people if they are hungry between meals.

Young people in the home have their specific health needs met through appointments with professionals such as the dentist, doctor and local authority nurse. This ensures that they are meeting their physical developmental milestones and their weight and health are carefully monitored. When young people are reluctant to attend such appointments, staff are resourceful and encouraging to ensure that individual health needs are monitored and reviewed regularly. The home has written permission in order that in the event of illness or accidental injury the right treatment for each young person can be sought. Medication is rarely administered, however, the medication administration systems in the home are clear and work well which promote good health for young people.

Staff, who provide good healthy role models, strongly promote active lifestyles and physical activities. Young people attend badminton, swimming and also enjoy ball games and local walks. This helps young people gain new skills and promotes healthy lifestyles within their daily routines.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are afforded privacy and given keys to lock their bedrooms. Staff respect their privacy by always knocking on doors and asking if they can go into young people's rooms. Showers and bathroom doors lock so that young people bath and shower privately. There is an atmosphere of trust and respect at the home generated by the daily conduct of staff and young people. Staff positively reinforce socially acceptable behaviour. Rewards are used to show that they value young people, who demonstrate their feelings in a socially acceptable manner. There are also sanctions and these are agreed with young people; however, at times these are not made clear to all staff and are therefore not promoted consistently. Some behaviours require physical interventions and these are carried out, when absolutely necessary, by trained staff.

Young people are provided with a portable house phone from the office which is sometimes placed in a communal area such as the games room. They are given some privacy as they can take this phone into the games room which is comfortable

and private. However, this phone is not exclusively for their use and has to be requested from staff, which does not meet with the regulatory requirements. Young people are encouraged to contribute their views both positive and negative to the manager. Forms have been placed centrally to give young people simple and easy ways of making a complaint about the home and help promote their safety and well-being. There has been one complaint from young people and one external complaint. These have both been investigated with clear outcomes recorded.

Staff protect young people from potential harm because they have been trained in child protection and have an understanding about their safeguarding responsibilities. Consequently, they are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know what to do to protect them. Staff are recruited carefully and new staff are subject to checks prior to employment. This means that young people are cared for by staff who have been selected and checked to ensure they are suitable and safe. Additionally young people are protected well from bullying. This is given a high profile in the home, and good preventative measures are used such as a designated member of staff and discussions on what to do if you are being bullied. This helps maintain a nurturing environment where all young people feel equally safe. Young people's physical safety and security are also carefully managed. Individual risk assessments are conducted and young people practise fire evacuations with staff to prepare them in the event of a fire.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are able to develop their interests and confidence by acquiring some new skills such as football and playing badminton at the local gym. The young people at the home have bicycles and there is a grassed area in the garden for ball games. Staff include young people's preferences as they plan events and activities with them. Young people are taken to tourist attractions that hold historical interest and areas that are significant to their individual family lives and backgrounds that they want to visit.

The home has developed an education provision on site for the young people and offers education daily to the young people requiring full-time education. However, young people do not make good use of the facilities and staff are not able to organise their regular attendance in education for a variety of reasons. There are also young people who attend the local college. They are given support and encouragement by staff who try to find appropriate courses and liaise closely with the tutors to ensure that courses are tailored toward individual preferences and abilities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are warmly welcomed to the home and small caring touches such as treasure boxes are given out on admission. This ensures that young people have small essentials and a keepsake from the home on leaving. New admissions to the home are planned carefully and the manager scrutinises each case to ensure that any new admissions are matched carefully to the resident group. This has recently led to a calm and harmonious atmosphere where young people are able to relax.

The staff make every effort to include and accommodate the views of young people and their families and ensure they have an opportunity to express their views about how their care is planned. House meetings are spontaneously arranged in order to get young people to contribute and attend. This ensures that young people willingly contribute at meetings that are held in accordance with their personal routines and well-being. The contact arrangements work well because staff are flexible and resourceful in their approach to family contact. Families are welcomed at the home and expectations set out clearly to ensure that relationships with significant family members can be maintained in a sensitive and appropriate manner. The manager and staff value young people's families and work hard to support young people to have regular and constructive contact with them. This helps young people feel accepted and valued.

The home plans carefully for each young person jointly with their families and relevant professionals. The manager has developed a holistic approach whereby the needs of the young person are carefully considered and reviewed with individual key worker staff. This ensures that goals and personal objectives are clearly set and each young person can make progress in all areas of their lives. Young people are central to this process and this is helped by the trusting relationships they have with staff. For example, young people are welcome in the office and often pop in for a chat or to share news with the manager. This promotes a relaxed atmosphere in which all areas of the home are freely accessible with the exception of bedrooms. Key workers have good relationships with young people who comment very positively on staff, naming one as having been an 'absolute legend'. This summarises the individual and tailored support that young people are given and the attention to small details which are important in their lives.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are cared for in a house that is warm, homely and maintained to a good standard. The home is designed well to meet the needs of the young people. Staff review the use of the rooms well to provide the best layout and arrangement of the space. For example, the office has recently been moved upstairs and this provides a quiet space that is not in the centre of the house. The garden is kept well and there is a pleasant decked area used in warmer months with a barbeque. Young

people use the grassed area for rugby and football, and education facilities have been developed from the outbuildings.

Young people are encouraged to develop skills that will support them into adulthood and the home facilitates this well. For example, the kitchen is easily accessible in the centre of the house and this encourages young people to cook and share meals together. Laundry facilities are provided in a utility room and staff help young people do their laundry. A designated morning is set aside for cleaning bedrooms and staff expect young people to do this and support them well. In addition, young people are encouraged to use and plan routes on public transport to give them experience and practise at becoming increasingly independent. These activities all help prepare young people for adulthood and their future lives.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The staff are supported well by the manager, who has high aspirations to provide good quality care. The manager is in turn supported by the management structure of the company, and provides guidance and supervision to the staff at the home. The home is monitored carefully by a senior member of the company and this ensures that shortfalls in recording and practice are addressed. The manager works a weekly care shift in addition to management duties, which gives her a good idea of how staff work and interact with the young people. This provides an insight into how the staff work together, and promotes good outcomes for young people. Staff are encouraged to reflect on one another's practice to ensure they use the best approach for each individual young person.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff give this time and consideration in how best to help young people accept and value one another's differences. Staff proactively promote discussions about their cultural and geographical roots helping young people understand that each person is unique and has an individual identity created by many influencing factors. There are displays, books and a good range of resources to support individual religious and cultural requirements. The manager is very careful to ensure that prior to accepting any new young person, the staff and local resources are appropriate in meeting their individual needs.

The staffing of the home has been given careful consideration by the manager who ensures the home is stable and well staffed while promoting best value for money. Recent changes include the employment of a housekeeper. This is beneficial to young people, who live in a clean and homely environment where home-cooked food is freshly prepared for them. Other staff are trained and given a clear induction to the home. This ensures young people are cared for by competent staff who understand the written procedures that underpin daily practice. Staff have designated roles which highlight areas that may otherwise be unclear. For example, a member of staff flags up different policies weekly and checks staff understand the written procedures. Another is responsible for promoting awareness and prevention

of bullying in the home. Overall, staff work collectively as a team and communication is good, promoting a peaceful and focused working environment where staff and young people support one another.

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
4	ensure that young people are provided with a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls which they may use without reference to persons working in the home (Regulation 15 (4) (a))	18/01/2011
14	promote the educational attainment by ensuring that young people make use of the educational facilities. (Regulation 18 (a))	11/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all measures to achieve acceptable behaviour and agreed daily routines are set out clearly and consistently promoted and understood by all staff. (NMS 22.1)