

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lindsey Blickem
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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

The home accommodates up to three young people aged eight to under 18 years. The home is owned by a large child care provider. The home provides care with education for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Each young person has their own bedroom. The home is situated in a rural area close to a large town and city. There are local shops and public transport within walking distance of the home. The home is an extended farmhouse with four bedrooms, a lounge, a games room and a kitchen/diner as well as an office. Outside there is a classroom, a large garden with a lawn area for activities and a fenced natural pond.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected.

This is a satisfactory service in all respects. Health needs are managed appropriately and the system for storing, handling and administering medication is safe and efficient. Young people enjoy appropriate privacy and the system for handling complaints is clear and encourages positive outcomes. Staff are well versed in safeguarding and child protection procedures and absconding incidents are well managed and appropriately safeguard young people's welfare. Sanctions are administered fairly and appropriately although lack opportunities for young people to make restitution or reparation. Physical restraints are managed safely and are only used when safety is at risk.

Young people are provided with good support in attending education which is individualised to their specific needs. Activities are varied and ensure that young people are actively and constructively engaged. Individual support is available and care arrangements are specific to the needs of young people living in the home.

Young people's needs are appropriately assessed and planned for and are regularly reviewed in light of the progress they make. Contact arrangements are sensitively and efficiently managed ensuring that young people have regular, planned contact with their families. Young people are made welcome when they are first admitted although some admissions are inappropriate and cause disruption to the young people living there.

Young people enjoy living in a comfortable and reasonably well decorated and furnished home although some furniture and décor is in a state of disrepair.

Staff are given good support from the manager and have access to training relevant to their role. There are, however, shortfalls in the number of staff working in the home.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager was asked to make suitable arrangements for recording young people's views following an absconding incident, when a sanction or physical restraint is used and for staff to sign records when a room search has been conducted. Some progress has been made to ensuring young people's views are sought following incidents thereby allowing them to express their views. The manager was also asked to ensure that there is a procedure for handling complaints

made neighbours, this has been fully addressed and creates an efficient system which allows complaints to be resolved more positively.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people enjoy a varied, well balanced and substantial diet. Detailed menus are completed for each week and take account of young people's choices, likes and dislikes. Meals are taken in the dining room which is reasonably furnished and there is a sociable atmosphere when staff and young people are seated together. Young people who have issues with regard to diet or food consumption are very well cared for and issues are managed sensitively and appropriate to their needs.

Young people have routine health appointments including with the dentist and optician, they are registered with a local GP and have appointments at the local surgery when needed. Details of young people's health needs are recorded within their placement plan and where there are specific health related issues these are well managed by staff, the majority of whom are first aid trained.

The system for administering medication is generally efficient and safe. Records are clear and include details of the medication, dose, time and date. Staff sign each entry and there is a good audit trail of medicines given to young people. Issues with regards to medication are dealt with well when a young person is admitted and staff evidently work hard to ensure that young people have all they need in relation to health soon after they arrive in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is appropriately protected and they enjoy private time and space when they choose. Bedrooms are lockable and there is no unnecessary intrusion by staff or other young people. Staff ensure young people are appropriately monitored and supervised whilst also affording them time alone if that is their wish. Written information is kept securely in the staff office and conversations with and about young people are held discreetly ensuring confidentiality.

The system for managing complaints is good. Young people may choose to complain formally or staff act on their behalf to raise an issue which the young person is clearly unhappy about, these issues are recorded fully and clearly in the complaints log and are managed effectively and sensitively to produce a positive outcome. Complaints from other people such as neighbours are managed in a similar way and recorded in a separate complaints log, again issues are managed effectively to produce a positive outcome and enable good relations.

Staff are fully aware of how to manage child protection or safeguarding issues. Training in child protection is mandatory and issues of concern or allegations are managed consistently and appropriately. Staff have access to a manager or senior member of staff within the company at all times and significant issues are deferred to them appropriately. The safeguarding procedures in place ensure young people are appropriately protected.

Staff work hard to ensure relationships between young people are as positive as possible. Difficulties between young people are managed sensitively and appropriately to ensure they

are safeguarded whilst also ensuring they enjoy good relationships based on respect, tolerance and understanding. Specific vulnerabilities are recognised and managed well and older young people are encouraged to act as positive role models to help create a harmonious environment.

Young people who are missing from home are well monitored and where possible well supervised whilst absent without permission. The system for reporting absconding to relevant authorities and to senior, on call, staff is efficient and consistent. Staff evidently work hard to ensure young people are safeguarded whilst absent without permission and there is clear evidence that this system works well. Incident reports are appropriately detailed and the manager has oversight of all issues with regards to absconding.

Sanctions administered by staff to young people are appropriate to the behaviours. Privileges are withdrawn when there is poor behaviour or money is paid back where there is damage to property. Sanctions are not excessive or inappropriate although there is little evidence of young people being required, or given the choice, to make amends through additional chores. Overall sanctions are consistently and safely managed but lack reparative elements.

Young people are protected from the risk of fire through regular fire alarm tests, emergency lighting tests and fire drills. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked and generally well maintained. Records of checks and tests are clear and well maintained.

Young people are looked after by staff who are subject to appropriate vetting and recruitment procedures which includes a CRB, at least two written references and photographic identification being in place prior to them starting work. Overall the recruitment and vetting procedures are satisfactory.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are given good individual support from staff and their specific needs are well cared for. The key worker system ensures that young people have individual time set aside for them and that they have the opportunity to express their views and raise any issues safely and in confidence. Young people's specific needs are managed sensitively and appropriately on a day-to-day basis.

Young people are given good support and encouragement to attend education and significant progress is made in ensuring they attend regularly. Individual educational packages are in place for young people and include having education on site with a qualified teacher or attending off site specialised education provision. Young people's progress with education is monitored appropriately to ensure they are receiving support appropriate to their specific needs.

Young people enjoy good opportunities to participate in recreation and leisure and include swimming, football, trips to the cinema, rowing and bowling. During the summer holidays young people have the opportunity to engage in planned community based sporting activities. There are also one-off or day trips planned throughout the summer including a trip to London and the opportunity to participate in motorcycle projects. Young people are from time-to-time encouraged to participate in community projects designed to support the environment. Overall recreational and leisure opportunities are increasing and thereby ensuring that young people are actively and constructively occupied.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's needs are appropriately identified within written placement plans which are reasonably comprehensive and together with other written information contained within case files provides good information about a young person's specific needs. Plans include up-to-date information relating to health, education and contact arrangements ensuring that young people's needs and how to meet those needs are well known to staff.

Staff comprehensively contribute to looked after children (LAC) reviews through the completion of detailed review reports. Reports contain all relevant information about the progress made by a young person whilst living in the home and evidence that staff are working effectively to meet identified needs. LAC review minutes are also contained within case files and provide further evidence of the progress made by young people and identify further support if required.

Contact arrangements are clearly identified within young people's case files and any issues in relation to contact are appropriately highlighted. Staff work consistently and within agreed plans to ensure contact arrangements are managed safely and also ensure that young people enjoy positive contact with significant others including family. Transport and supervision for contact arrangements is supplied by staff where needed and young people have access to a telephone relatively freely.

Young people are admitted to the home sensitively and are made as comfortable as possible on arrival. Information in relation to young people's needs is obtained by the manager as far as is possible prior to them coming to the home. The home does admit young people, at times, inappropriately which causes disruption to young people already living there. The staff and manager try to manage these situations as best as they can although are not ultimately responsible for admissions. The company which is responsible for the home is at times insensitive to the needs of the young people living there by making inappropriate admissions.

Young people have the opportunity to express their views and opinions either through key worker sessions, residents meetings or more informally on a day-to-day basis. Views and opinions are actively listened to and staff make adjustments to care and support as is appropriate. Support is given to young people based on their individual needs and also takes account of their views and opinions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people enjoy living in a spacious and reasonably well furnished and decorated home. The home is welcoming and reasonably well maintained throughout. The kitchen is spacious and well equipped and the dining area comfortably accommodates staff and young people. The lounge is also spacious with comfortable furniture and is attractive. Bedrooms are personalised to the individual tastes of young people and are well furnished with a bed, chest of drawers, desk and wardrobe. The bathroom is well equipped and clean. The garden is large and has a large pond which has appropriate safety precautions including fencing and floatation devices. The home is clean and tidy throughout and facilities accommodate the needs of the young people living there. Some furniture and fixings have fallen into disrepair, such as, the lounge settee and dining chairs. Décor is generally adequate although one person's bedroom has damage to one wall.

Young people are encouraged to actively participate in the preparation of meals and to keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. Plans for young people to become independent are clear and take account of their individual circumstances and abilities. Although no young people are presently engaged in preparation for independence due to their respective ages preliminary plans are in place for when they do reach an age where independence will be worked towards. These plans include assistance with budgeting, support with developing realistic expectations with regards to social and leisure activities as well as support with learning domestic skills such as cleaning, cooking and washing.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The statement of purpose is largely unchanged since the last inspection and includes all relevant and required information in relation to what support, facilities and services are available to young people living there. This document provides a good overview of the care the home provides. Additionally the children's guide is a shortened version of the statement of purpose in a more child friendly format. The guide provides young people with information in relation to expectations, education, contact and health as well as what they can expect from staff caring for them.

Staff are given good support from the manager and have access to training which is relevant to supporting them in their role. Training includes child protection, de escalation techniques and physical restraint, first aid, manual handling and positive listening. The rolling programme of training ensures that new staff receive mandatory training within a reasonable timescales from starting work in the home.

Staff receive regular, formal supervision with the manager usually monthly. Staff are very positive about the leadership and support the manager provides and although the staff team has had a difficult few months with the change in management and young people, they remain positive and committed to their role. There is an active recruitment campaign in order to address the shortfall in staff numbers and has been successful in appointing a deputy manager. There does, however, remain some shortfalls in the number of care staff. Despite the shortfall in staff numbers the young people have enjoyed reasonable consistency when the use of agency staff has been necessary.

The manager is actively rebuilding the team both in terms of numbers and in terms of quality and confidence. A number of staff have left in recent months together with the former manager and new young people have been admitted to the home. Some admissions have been inappropriate causing further disruption although staff have persevered and made good progress in settling the home.

Visits on behalf of the responsible individual occur monthly and a detailed report is completed and supplied to the manager in good time. The report includes analysis of administration and care practices and gives a good, more objective, oversight of the progress made by staff and young people. The reporting process provides the manager with action points whilst also acknowledging positives.

Case files are generally well maintained and contain all required information. Case files are accessible to staff and information about young people clearly shows the progress they have

made whilst living in the home. Files are kept securely within the staff office ensuring confidentiality.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people receive individualised care and their specific needs are met. The culture of the home largely reflects the backgrounds of young people cared for and there is some work undertaken that ensures young people learn about different cultures and for them to engage in local community projects.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are suitably furnished and reasonably decorated (Regulation 31) (2) (c) & (e)	31 August 2009
30	employ sufficient staff for the running of the home taking into account the needs and behaviour of the children and young people. This is in relation to the shortfall in staff numbers (Regulation 25) (1).	1 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that both the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his or her admission upon the existing group of residents, are taken into account, and recorded, in decisions on admissions to the home (NMS 5.7)
- ensure that measures of control and disciplinary measures are based on establishing positive relationships with children which are designed to help the child. Such measures are fair and consistently applied. They also encourage reparation and restitution and reduce the likelihood of negative behaviour becoming the focus of attention and subsequent disruption to the placement (NMS 22.33).