

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 provides accommodation for up to two young people of either sex, aged between 10 and 17 years, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is a detached property set in a rural location. On the ground floor there is a large lounge, kitchen, laundry facilities and a shower room with toilet. On the first floor there are two individual bedrooms, an office with sleeping-in facilities, a second staff sleeping-in room and the young people's bathroom.

There is a garden to the front and rear of the house. Young people at the home have access to private car transport, and the home is within easy reach of several towns, where there are good facilities for sports and other activities.

The company provides education through contracted services from another private provider, who operates a small specialist school approximately 20 miles away.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection of this service and all key standards were judged. There were two young people present in the home at the time of the inspection.

The overall judgement for the home is good and each of the outcome groups are judged as good. Four recommendations are made; these are in the being healthy, staying safe, and economic well-being and organisation outcome groups. There were no actions or recommendations made at the previous inspection, so there were no improvements to be judged.

None of the recommendations has a significant impact on the safety of young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's health is promoted by the provision of a generally well balanced diet. Young people are given dietary advice by staff and all meals eaten are well recorded. Any dietary concerns identified as a result of the daily records, are discussed with young people and if necessary with health professionals. Young people are encouraged to shop for and prepare some meals, though staff ensure that there is at least one balanced meal a day served to young people. All staff receive training in dietary awareness as part of their induction training. This is regularly updated. Most meals are eaten at the dining table and are conducted as pleasant social occasions. Young people are encouraged to prepare meals using fresh ingredients, with only occasional convenience foods eaten.

Each young person is registered with a doctor, dentist and optician shortly after moving to the home. Some choice of health professional is offered to young people, and personal; preferences are considered. However, in reality the choice available is limited. Each young person has a comprehensive personal health plan and appropriate signed consents for medical treatment. This ensures that there is no delay in seeking emergency medical treatment. Health plans include emotional and physical health. Specialist support is available to young people if necessary. All young people have regular health checks. Any appointment or treatment is recorded in the case records.

All medicines are safely stored in a safe in a locked office. All staff receive training in the safe storage, disposal and administration of medicines. There is now a controlled drugs book held in the home, all records in this were accurate, well recorded and appropriately signed for. However, the record of paracetamol tablets held in the home recorded 20 tablets in stock, the actual number of paracetamol tablets held in stock was eight. Any unused medicines are returned to the pharmacy. Young people do not generally self administer medicines other than inhalers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is protected in this home by clear policies and procedures that are known and followed by staff. All young people's bedrooms can be locked, and are alarmed at night. Young people say that staff respect their privacy and do not enter bedrooms without knocking and calling out. Young people are able to have their own mobile telephone subject to a risk assessment, however, if they need to use the office telephone at anytime, staff dial the number for them. All bathroom and toilet doors are fitted with suitable locks.

Young people say that they know how to raise a complaint or concern and that they are satisfied that it will be considered fairly and seriously. The record of complaints holds all of the information required and is regularly monitored. There are no

complaints recorded since the last inspection. Staff are trained in how to assist young people in making a complaint.

The safeguarding of young people is promoted by the use of robust policies and procedures which are known to staff. Staff are familiar with referral processes and contact details for the local authority designated officer (LADO) are displayed in the office. Staff receive training as part of their induction; this is regularly reviewed. No child protection referrals have been made since the last inspection.

Staff receive training in bullying awareness as part of their induction programme. Staff remain vigilant to incidents of bullying and any concerns are raised with young people in house meetings or one-to-one sessions. Young people say that bullying is not an issue in the home.

Staff are aware of the policy to be followed if young people are missing from the home. Each young person has a behaviour strategy plan, which includes the actions to be taken if they are absent without authority. The home liaises closely with the police and all young people are given the opportunity to contact their families or social workers on their return. All absences are well recorded and monitored by managers.

All significant events are reported to the appropriate agencies, there is a recent increase in the number of significant events requiring notification.

Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviours by the use of a behaviour management policy which uses reward and praise. Young people can negotiate targets and rewards with staff and are set firm boundaries. All staff receive training in an accredited method of physical restraint, to use as a last resort. Young people say that restraint is only used occasionally and only when necessary. Any use of physical restraint is well recorded and regularly reviewed. Sanctions are also imposed when necessary, no inappropriate sanctions are recorded, however, there are a high number of financial sanctions.

The physical safety of young people and staff is protected by extensive use of risk assessment for the premises, the environment, equipment, activities and individuals. Staff sign risk assessments to say they have read them and understand them. External health and safety consultants carry out regular health and safety checks. Fire equipment tests are regularly carried out and the number of fire drills exceeds the number required.

Staff recruitment records are held at the company head office. They were recently found to be well ordered with an excellent file audit system in place, and they contain all the information required by Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Each young person is allocated a key worker, and regular one-to-one meetings take place. These are recorded in individual case files. Individual needs are clearly identified in placement plans. More specialist support such as a visiting psychotherapist is available to young people if necessary and can be arranged in consultation with placing social workers.

Young people's educational achievement is supported by staff, and young people who may not have attended school for some time prior to living at the home are provided with regular education. Staff provide transport to and from school and will if required provide support in school. Each young person has a personal education plan, and the case file holds copies of previous school reports, enabling educational developments to be monitored. Staff are aware of each young person's educational needs and how they are to be met. When young people leave school, they are supported in gaining places at local colleges or in local employment or apprenticeships. Despite the encouragement of staff these opportunities are not always taken up.

Young people say that there is a good range of leisure and sports activities to participate in. However, some young people prefer to spend time socialising with friends rather than participating in organised activities. All activities are risk assessed and appropriate consents for participation are in place.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has a placement plan, which identifies needs and how they will be met by staff. These plans are detailed and are updated each month or after any significant changes. Young people are able to contribute to their placement plans. Young people say that their opinions are taken into consideration when the plans are drawn up. All activities, daily events and appointments are well recorded. The young people's placement plans do not have copies of the placement agreement.

Each young person has regular placement reviews and they are invited to attend and contribute to the process. Young people say that they are always invited to attend their meetings.

The importance of contact with families is understood and supported by staff. Contact arrangements are detailed in placement plans, however, in some cases are slightly unclear.

Young people are involved in day-to-day decision making in the home and are given clear expectations regarding behaviours and tasks to be undertaken. Relationships between young people and staff are positive, though at times may be challenged.

Staff demonstrate that their expectations of young people, is rooted in mutual respect and young people's best interest.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Each young person is provided with a programme aimed at developing the skills needed to make a successful transition from childhood to adulthood. Young people are encouraged to develop life and social skills initially through an informal process of trying to give greater personal responsibility to young people. However, not all young people fully participate in the more formal programme, as a result some young people approach leaving the home with very limited formal preparation for leaving care and limited leaving care plans.

Young people say that they are given sufficient money to buy their own clothes and toiletries with staff guidance and support if needed. They are also encouraged to buy their own food and household goods as part of the independence programme.

The home is located in a rural environment a short distance from the local town where there are many local amenities and attractions, including sports and leisure facilities. The home is well designed and equipped, with sufficient facilities to meet the needs of the young people living there.

The home is well maintained, decorated and furnished throughout. All young people have attractive individual bedrooms and may personalise them to suit their own taste. They are suitably furnished and spacious enough to accommodate everything they need. However, show signs of heavy use despite the maintenance programme that is in place.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is well managed. Planning to meet the individual and varying needs of each young person is good. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is threaded through each of the outcome groups and is reflected in the individual programmes of care. Staff are very aware and responsive to each young person's individual needs.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide accurately describe what a young person can expect from the service. These documents are reviewed annually and hold all of the information required.

Staff say that they are well supported by managers and all staff receive a detailed induction training programme, regular supervision and appraisal. There is a comprehensive training programme and all staff either hold the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Caring for Children and Young people at level 3 or are

currently undertaking the award. Staff do not undertake NVQ training until they have successfully completed their probationary period.

The home is sufficiently staffed to meet the needs of the young people, each shift has two or three staff members, there is always two experienced staff members working with recently appointed staff. Staff absence is usually covered within the team, on a limited number of occasions agency staff are used to cover absence.

The quality of the service is monitored regularly by a visiting director and by the manager, each of whom produce detailed reports. These are discussed in team meetings and staff are aware of any shortfalls in quality that are identified. Copies of the Regulation 33 reports are being regularly received by Ofsted. A new manager has been registered since the last inspection.

The young people's case files hold most of the key information required and are well structured, up to date and regularly audited. However, they do not hold agreements to place young people at the home.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that accurate records of the administration of medicines are held by the home (NMS 13.2)
- ensure that any restriction on communication by the child must have been agreed by the child's parents or a person with parental responsibility (NMS 9.4)
- ensure that all young people have comprehensive leaving care plans and pathway plans which specify the support and assistance they will need in order to make a successful transition into adulthood and that this plan is implemented in practice (NMS 6.1)
- ensure that young people's case records hold all of the information held in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations, namely a signed agreement to place the child at the home. (NMS 35.2).