

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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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

This children's home is situated on a main road in a residential area. It is a detached property with four bedrooms and is operated by a private company that has several other children's services throughout the country. The service is registered to provide long term care and accommodation for two children between the ages of 10 years and 17 years of age.

Summary

At this unannounced key inspection all key national minimum standards were examined. This is a good children's home with some outstanding features. The staff team are highly motivated and committed to enabling young people to achieve good outcomes from their placement. The home provides a nurturing and stable environment, in which the diverse needs of each individual is identified and met appropriately.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last interim inspection in January 2009, two recommendations were made. The Registered Manager had been asked to ensure that all records relating to absence without authority are robust and cohesive. The company has since introduced new recording systems and this has resolved this shortfall. A further recommendation had been to ensure that there is a senior member of staff on duty on each and every shift. This recommendation has not been addressed. It is understood that the staffing structure provides for a full time Registered Manager and a full time senior care worker. However if neither of these two members of staff are on duty, then there is no clearly identified member of staff responsible for deputising in the Registered Managers absence, although there is an external on call manager on duty within the company.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The service promotes healthy lifestyles for young people and achieves this to a good standard.

The young people enjoy a healthy and nutritious diet. Meals are home cooked and young people are very involved in menu planning. A diverse range of meals are provided and young people are encouraged to widen their dietary repertoire, although alternatives are always available. The staff work hard to promote 5-a-day and young people demonstrate a good awareness of healthy eating and developing healthy routines.

Young people live in a healthy environment and their health needs are thoroughly addressed. All individuals have a detailed healthcare plan, which is regularly updated. The service provides specialist therapeutic counselling and the home's support staff enable young people to access appropriate local services. Key staff support young people in their attendance at healthcare appointments, while also recognising the young persons' right to privacy. The staff promote a wide range of physical and leisure activities, with young people participating in a variety of community based activities and daily exercise such as skating and trampolining. Staff work directly with young people in key worker sessions, supporting their interests and encouraging healthy lifestyles.

Staff administer prescribed medication and all have had training and undergo periodic refresher training. Suitable storage is provided for the safe keeping of medication. One item in use did not have its dispensing label. Medication administration records do not always state the time that PRN (occasional) medication is administered. All staff are provided with first aid training and staffing rotas ensure that there is always a first aid member of staff on duty. First Aid boxes are provided both in the house and in the car.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are policies and procedures in place to ensure that young people are safe and staff are thorough and competent in their practices.

The home promotes the privacy of young people well and staff are very respectful of young people's personal space needs and their right to have personal information treated with confidentiality. Staff speak about the young people in a caring and respectful way and instil these values in the young people so that they learn to care for and respect each other. Personal records are securely stored, while still providing suitable access to enable staff to be appropriately informed and keep records up-to-date.

The service has an established and thorough complaints procedure accessible to young people, their families and professionals. Child friendly forms are not in place. Young people and staff have a very open rapport, which means that any issues that young people do raise are managed well.

Child protection procedures are in place and staff have young people's safety and welfare as their priority. Staff confirmed that they are aware of their responsibilities and have had appropriate training and have access to written procedures. The home has very good links with the local safeguarding team. Staff use key worker sessions and young person's meetings to discuss with young people about the importance of staying safe and how they can develop their personal responsibility, especially during unsupervised free time.

A policy to counter bullying is in place and young people are aware that bullying is not acceptable. Staff work hard to help young people develop their awareness of the many forms of bullying and to develop their confidence to know how to respond appropriately if they are bullied. Staff promote positive role models and encourage young people to treat each other with respect. There are also appropriate systems in place to protect young people who go missing from home. Records demonstrate that appropriate action is taken and staff follow clear protocols.

Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour through clear and consistent staff guidance. Staff and young people enjoy a very good rapport and their relationships are built on honesty and mutual respect. Positive behaviour is rewarded with recognition and rewards that are meaningful to the individual. A system of reparations is in use and repayments are appropriate and proportionate. The home's policy regarding physical intervention is based primarily on de-escalation techniques and restraint would only ever be used as a last resort and at the lowest level possible to ensure the safety of the young person.

The environment is well maintained, including routine health and safety checks and risk assessments. For example, comprehensive fire safety procedures are in place including regular

fire drills in which both staff and young people participate. Named staff drive the house car, which young people use regularly, but staff have not been assessed as suitable and competent by the organisation.

Comprehensive staff recruitment procedures, including clearance checks, are followed with all checks having to be in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. Main staff files are kept at the north west regional office, but the house also holds a staff file and has a proforma which evidences that appropriate checks have been carried out. These staff details differed slightly, meaning that some did not adequately evidence that appropriate checks had been carried out. For example, one did not have the CRB reference number or confirmation of a POCA check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are well supported to develop skills and confidence in a range of social, domestic and learning settings.

An effective key worker system is in place and young people speak positively of their key workers. Young people receive highly personalised daily support which meets their assessed needs and promotes their confidence and personal skills. Staff are committed to achieving the objectives of the placement plan and ensuring that young people benefit from their placement. Young people are very positive about their placement at this home and recognise how well they are doing.

On site education is provided and young people are also able to access a wide range of external educational resources. Staff are mindful of the social importance of education and support opportunities for young people to attend local colleges and work experience.

The home provides young people with excellent opportunities to take part in a variety of planned activities as well as having free time to spend with friends. Staff encourage friends to visit and facilitate transport to planned activities and when young people want to visit friends who do not live locally.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff work hard to enable young people to make a positive contribution while living at the service and to achieve good outcomes from their placement.

Young people admitted to the home have their needs comprehensively assessed, including a compatibility assessment, and have a detailed placement plan. Staff work hard to help young people to settle in and to achieve their objectives. Key workers provide weekly reports to the placing authority and these contribute to statutory reviews. Social workers are complimentary of the support and stability staff provide to young people and of their effective communication in keeping them informed of important information. Key worker sessions are held regularly, providing good records which evidence both sensitive support and a diversity of subject areas.

Staff work positively to facilitate face to face contact with family and friends, making considerable journeys where necessary. Contact via telephone and letter is also facilitated. Any restriction on contact is understood by staff and well recorded within individual plans.

Staff understand the importance of securing young people's participation and personal decision making. Through an open and positive rapport, and in providing good role models, staff encourage young people to develop their confidence to make a positive contribution to the home and also in their local community. Young people's meetings and key worker sessions are held regularly and young people also confirm that they can speak with staff at any time.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to learn a range of skills that will prepare them for adulthood, including budgeting, catering and other domestic skills.

Young people benefit from a well maintained, nicely furnished and homely environment. Young people have a single bedroom. These are well decorated and personalised. Young people are very involved in choosing their own accessories and themes. Communal areas are comfortable, spacious and domestic in style. There is a separate education room.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a well managed service, providing a positive and nurturing environment that achieves good outcomes for young people. Young people directly commented that they are very satisfied with their placement and acknowledge their achievements.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The young people receive very personalised support to meet their assessed needs. Detailed placement plans and good team work ensure that all aspects of individual needs are identified and met. Evidence supports the service's commitment to further improving equality and diversity in practice to enhance outcomes for young people.

The Statement of Purpose has recently been updated and contains all of the required information. Young people are given information when they arrive at the home and information is also displayed on a notice board.

Young people are supported by staff who are experienced, competent and qualified to meet their needs appropriately. Staff are well supported by an effective management structure and regular supervision. An ongoing training programme ensures that staff have regular opportunities to refresh their knowledge and learn new skills. However, staff training records do not fully evidence the range of training staff have received, but this is being addressed by the Registered Manager and other senior managers in the company.

Approximately 66% of the staff team have at least National Vocational Qualification 3 and another member of staff just needs to have work signed off. This means that young people are being cared for by staff whose competence as carers of children and young people have been verified by an independent body. The Registered Manager is undertaking NVQ level 4 in Leadership and Management. The senior structure, which consists of the Registered Manager

and a Senior Residential Support Worker, is supported by the Area Manager who has line manager responsibility for five homes in the region. However the home does not provide clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the Registered Manager's absence, unless the senior is on duty, which is not always possible and therefore on occasions two care staff with equal responsibility are on duty. Emergency support is provided to the home via the organisation's on call system, providing staff on duty with access to advice and support during emergency situations.

Staffing levels are flexibly arranged to meet the needs of young people. A key worker system is in use and very well thought of by young people. All staff receive supervision each month and newly appointed staff have supervision every two weeks throughout their first six months. Staff turnover is low and recent changes have been arranged within the company to meet the needs of young people. Staff absences are covered mainly from within the team and by using two identified casual staff, which provides young people with a high degree of consistency.

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
13	ensure that all prescribed medication being administered to young people has the dispensing instructions label attached (Regulation 21, NMS 13)	30 May 2009
13	ensure that records include the time that any PRN (occasional) medication, such as painkillers, is administered to a young person (Regulation 21, NMS 13)	30 May 2009
27	ensure that all appropriate information in respect of safe recruiting and vetting of staff is obtained, maintained on file and available for inspection (Regulation 25, 26 and 27, NMS 27).	30 May 2009

Recommendations

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

- provide clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the Registered Manager's absence, ensuring that they have at least one year's relevant supervisory experience (NMS 29)
- provide complaint information in child friendly formats that meet diverse needs (NMS 16)
- ensure all staff with responsibility for driving young people in the home's car have been assessed as suitable and competent (NMS 26)