

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sharon Lloyd
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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

New Vale House is a detached house situated in a residential area. The ground floor has a large lounge, conservatory, dining room, kitchen, laundry, toilet and staff office. Upstairs there are three bedrooms for the use of young people and a staff sleeping-in room. It is situated close to community and leisure facilities and public transport. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people placed by their local authorities. The home was registered in October 2009 and staff and young people transferred from a previous children's home. A new manager was appointed and registered with Ofsted in August 2010.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This interim inspection took place unannounced over five hours. Two of the three children were present but did not participate in the inspection. One child was missing. Recommendations made following the last inspection were followed up and the home's safeguarding procedures were assessed.

Five recommendations are made from this inspection, three of which remain unmet from a previous inspection. The home continues to have good procedures that protect children well; however, shortfalls in organisation mean that children are looked after by staff who do not get as much supervision and training as they need. New children are not always well matched to children already in placement and this results in further placement moves for some. One action is raised to provide staff sleeping-in with suitable sleeping accommodation.

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations to improve the practice within the home were made following the last inspection and three remain unmet. One of these related to the premises and the other three to the staffing arrangements. The home is maintained in a reasonable state of repair. It has suffered extensive damage in recent months and most of the damage has now been repaired. The home is currently being redecorated to provide more homely accommodation. Some minor damage to the premises remains outstanding. For example, the lock on a child's bedroom door is loose and is a potential hazard. This recommendation is repeated.

Although there has been some improvement in the level of one-to-one supervision provided to staff, this does not yet meet the national minimum standard (NMS). This means that children are cared for by staff who are not adequately supervised. The recommendation is repeated.

Five of the nine staff who work at the home are suitably qualified and one is currently undertaking a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. This does not meet the national minimum standard so the home still does not have a suitably qualified workforce. This recommendation is repeated.

The manager confirmed that staff training is available in all matters listed in Appendix 2 of the NMS, however this is not easily demonstrated by the training matrix. Although not all staff have completed all relevant training yet, there is evidence that they are accessing the above training through the company's rolling training programme. This means that although some staff are not yet sufficiently well trained and competent to meet children's complex and challenging needs, the company is addressing this shortfall. This recommendation is therefore not repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has good systems in place that promote children's dignity and staff respect their privacy. A telephone is available at all reasonable hours so they can make phone calls in private. Room searches are carried out in accordance with strict guidance that staff know and follow. There are locks fitted to bathroom and bedroom doors and staff do not enter a child's bedroom without knocking and gaining permission to enter. Confidential information is stored in locked metal filing cabinets.

Children know how to complain and are encouraged to do so when they are dissatisfied with any aspect of their care. In addition to the formal complaints procedure, children have the opportunity to meet with staff each fortnight to discuss matters relating to their care and the operation of the home. They are invited to air any grievances and these are dealt with promptly. There have been no complaints from children since the last inspection. One complaint from a neighbour has been appropriately dealt with in a timely manner.

Staff receive training in safeguarding children and know what to do in the event of a child making a disclosure or allegation of abuse. Some are not familiar with the role of the local authority designated officer and the safeguarding unit. They would not know how to protect children if the manager or senior manager failed to act appropriately; however, the manager is clear about her role and duties to refer allegations of abuse to the local safeguarding team.

Staff recognise bullying and address it with children through key worker sessions and

children's meetings. They challenge incidents of bullying whenever they occur. The home reviews individual risk assessments when they come across bullying so that staff receive good guidance in how to keep children safe from bullying. This includes increasing supervision levels to promote the safety of children at risk.

Staff know and follow good procedures that promote the safety and welfare of children who are missing from home. They work with the police and other professionals to help locate missing children quickly. Records demonstrate that children have the opportunity to speak to the police about any issues within the home that might have caused them to go missing. Staff also speak to children on their return to ascertain the reason for their absence. Children are made welcome on their return.

Staff use positive measures of control and develop behaviour management strategies that are individual to each child, dependant on their needs. Staff receive professional guidance from a qualified therapist that assists them in developing the skills and strategies they need to manage individual children. Sanctions used are appropriate and are well recorded. There have been 25 restraints since the last inspection. Many have occurred as a result of assaults on staff and always to prevent injury to children and staff. Children are routinely offered the opportunity to discuss any restraint and to record their views in the restraint log book.

Ongoing problems with the central heating system have recently been addressed so that the home is adequately heated. Routine health and safety checks and regular fire drills provide a safe environment for children and staff. Staff follow good routines so that the home is kept safe, clean and reasonably tidy.

Staff recruitment records were not checked as part of this inspection. The home maintains a visitors log and records all visitors. Staff keep children safe from potential abusers by supervising visitors and workmen who have not had an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The manager is not involved in decisions about new admissions to the home. As a result, matching of children is sometimes poor. For example, one child had to move on within two months because of her impact on the two children already in placement. Another child was bullied for several weeks after admission by an older child for whom this was a long term placement. As a result, the older child's placement disrupted and he was discharged to another home run by the same

company.

No other aspects of this outcome area were judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Two members of staff sleep-in at the home each night. However, only one staff bedroom is available. This means that the second member of staff sleeps on a chair bed in the office. Conditions are cramped and the bed is reportedly uncomfortable. This means that staff are not getting a reasonable night's sleep and are overly tired for their next shift. This has the potential to impact negatively on their levels of patience and tolerance with children.

No other aspects of this outcome area were judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
24	provide for persons working at the home: sleeping accommodation, storage facilities and facilities for the purpose of changing. (Regulation 31 (10))	09/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a minimum ratio of all care staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification training at level 3 (NMS 29)
- ensure that all staff receive one-to-one supervision each month (NMS 28)

- ensure that the home is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair (NMS 24)
- ensure that all staff are familiar with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures (NMS 17.2)
- ensure that both the needs of the child concerned and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of children are taken into account and recorded, in decisions on admissions to the home. (NMS 5.7)