

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Rachel Ruth Britten
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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 is a home that provides accommodation for up to three young people, aged from 10 to 17 years old, at any one time. It is part of the Blue Mountain Group of homes.

The home is situated on a main road in a rural location in the Derbyshire peak district, two miles from the nearest town. A range of outdoor activities are made available as well as transport to local leisure centres, shops and cinema.

The accommodation consists of three single bedrooms, each with their own bathroom facilities. On the ground floor there is a kitchen, living room and staff/visitors bathroom. The office, sleeping in room and young people's bedrooms are all situated on the first floor.

There are two young people currently living in the home. Both young people were present and they took part in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

The purpose of this first unannounced full inspection was to inspect all key standards. All outcome areas were looked at during the inspection. This is a new service which is satisfactory overall, with many good features. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the good relationships that exist between staff and young people. Young people's health, enjoyment and achievement, developing independence and confidence is provided for well. They are enjoying the stability of consistent, positive input and their risk-taking behaviour is reducing. The home works well with a wide range of outside agencies, placing authorities and families, to promote stability for young people and meet their individual needs. However, staff qualifications do not meet requirements and there are many areas where documentation is not used to best effect. In many instances, this is because issues have not been identified during the home's first six months of operation. The shortfalls have the potential to undermine young people's safety, welfare and involvement. However, their actual impact upon the outcomes for young people is presently minimal.

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious food and have good opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals. A sensible meal routine is also encouraged by staff, including diverse meal occasions both in the home and local community. This successfully helps young people to develop a healthy, well-functioning daily routine.

The thorough approach to each young person's ongoing individual health is detailed in their health file. Staff ensure that young people are sensitively supported to have their medical, dental, hearing, optical and sexual health and identity needs fully addressed. They provide information, education and assistance with making and attending appointments. Young people are exercising their increasing competence and independence by going into appointments on their own. They also have their own bathrooms and are taking evident pride in their personal hygiene, style and presentation. Staff encourage young people to stop smoking by providing advice, information and access to professional help.

There are generally good records for medication, treatment and first aid. These support young people's health robustly. For example, consents from placing authorities and parents for emergency treatment and medication administration are in place. Staff are all trained in first aid and there are systems for regular checking of first aid supplies in the home and vehicles. Both prescribed and non-prescribed medication is stored safely and accounted for, which secures young people's health and safety. However, the record of stored medicines does not detail how medication is disposed of. It also does not make sufficiently clear in every case which young person it is for. This shortfall is minor because in practice medications are returned to a pharmacy for disposal and individual young persons' medication records show who has each medicine.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected carefully in respect of their personal space, bathroom facilities and contact with friends and families. Their privacy is appropriately balanced with safeguarding needs. For example, lockable bathrooms can be accessed from the outside in an emergency and bedrooms doors are fitted with alerts which are activated at night to inform staff if young people leave their rooms. Visitors to the setting are properly monitored and the selection and vetting of staff is mostly robust. However, a gap in employment history has not been identified during vetting and the start date is not clear on one staff file. The impact of this shortfall is small because the systems for logging staff employment history are already sufficient if they are robustly followed and checked.

Young people know how to complain and make use of the grumble book. They are confident to ask for staff help to secure their rights to confidentiality. However, the

home's record of complaints is not fully utilised to track informal and/or external complaints. This makes it difficult to monitor all complaints and demonstrate that young people's safety and welfare has been prioritised in every case. Young people who are vulnerable to abuse are being protected by staff that are trained and aware of child protection practice and procedures. They know how and when to report safeguarding concerns and they adopt safe and positive practice. This practice also counters bullying and minimises the need for physical intervention or restraint because interactions are positive and based upon praise and reward. Young people are protected and empowered as a result. However, when restraints have been used, the record is only partially effective in prompting staff to remind young people of their right to have a medical check. In addition, young people's views about the restraint are rarely obtained, so the incident record is not used as a learning tool. Young people's risk assessments address specifically their individual safeguarding needs with strategies to help them progress and develop safer, more positive lifestyles. Generic risk assessments cover the indoor and outdoor environment of the home. This includes planning for outdoor activities, such as camping and water sports. However, the camping risk assessment does not make clear how child protection guidelines are actually put into practice in the camping context. These shortfalls have the potential to compromise young people's safety.

The instances of young people going missing without authority are reducing. Staff are implementing effective behaviour management strategies and their positive relationships help young people to feel safe and secure. For example, young people readily use the 'grab bags' containing a high visibility jacket and torch if they want to walk off site and they are increasingly allowing staff to accompany, follow or dissuade them from leaving the premises at all. The home is properly insured and the utilities are checked for safety, including gas, electrical and fire safety. This ensures that the premises are safe for young people. However, the hot water risk assessment is not being followed and no night time fire drill has been conducted. These shortfalls have the potential to increase the risks of burns if there is a fire or if water overheats.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive a good level of individual support from all staff and particularly their key workers. They spend most of their time with staff because they are not currently in full time education. An activity based curriculum, independence programmes and adult support are tailored to each individual young person, so that each one is gradually learning to adopt better daily routines and make positive adult and peer relationships. Within the home, there are simple daily incentives to get up, shower, take part in activities and behave well. There is participation alongside staff in meal preparation, cleaning and tidying bedrooms, and undertaking shopping, gardening, laundry, car washing and pet care around the house. Young people are also helped to access and gain from contacts with health and other professionals, improving their self-confidence and understanding of their past experiences and current needs.

Young people are encouraged to adopt an active and healthy lifestyle, with outdoor or sporting activity being particularly enjoyed by some. Fishing, skating, cycling, camping and kayaking are benefitting some young people enormously, while beauty treatments, shopping and home-making skills are benefitting others. There are good levels of activity based upon gaining knowledge and understanding of the world, current affairs and cultural issues. Young people are keen to learn about cultures and history, for example, apartheid in South Africa. Efforts to support re-entry into mainstream education are being prioritised where appropriate and staff are investing high levels of commitment in enabling young people to gradually succeed. Library access and study facilities are adequate, but are not well used. Staff have not yet made computers available for study due to concerns about ensuring safe use of the internet. In some cases, team work with the placing authorities is insufficient to ensure that clear personal education plans are made and followed. This is potentially holding back the educational progress of some young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Overall, young people enjoy good relationships with staff which are based on mutual respect and understanding. They feel safe and supported as they have contact with their families and other professionals, begin to attend new schools, or try new activities. This is helping them to cope more positively when faced with challenges or difficult situations. Young people say that they can always talk to all the staff and the manager. They can make choices, for example about having pet rabbits, or what to make for dinner. They feel listened to and are involved in decisions and plans which are made about them. They have good opportunities to talk with staff about their developing identity and evolve their own beliefs about their place in the world. For example, they talk in weekly house meetings about recent events in the press from around the world and they have debates at mealtimes both at the home and at various restaurants.

Young people know that there are behaviour plans and risk assessments made about them and that these are periodically reviewed as things change. They know that they have care plans and can see their personal files. They sign up to the complaints procedure, phone arrangements and fire evacuation procedures. However, young people do not often make comments about their reviews, monthly reports or their care plans and they are not actively included in writing or signing up to them. This reduces the effectiveness of some documents because young people are not sure what they are about and what difference they should make to their day-to-day aims and aspirations for their future.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live in a very pleasant and comfortable home, with plenty of space indoors and out. It is very well maintained and improvements are planned alongside the young people to include their choices. Young people are enjoying the views and rural activities without having to compromise their access to social and urban activities. This is because staff make sure that transport and staffing arrangements provide for young people's activity choices to be met. Young people have been encouraged to personalise their rooms and benefit from having their own bathroom and toilet. They are proud of their space and look after it as a result.

Young people are being given opportunities to develop skills for future independence which are appropriate to their age and needs. Plans are made in consultation with placing authorities and take account of young people's attachments to, and trust in, staff at the home. There is an assumption that the stability of the present placements provides a good foundation for young people to make progress, and young people say they want to remain here.

Young people are encouraged and enabled to choose their own clothes and personal things and have good opportunities to earn and save money over and above their allowances. Risk assessments provide appropriately for them to have some 'trust time' when they can shop independently. Choices which reflect young people's cultural interests and backgrounds are fully supported, helping to promote their identity and self-confidence. Young people's money is held in safe keeping for them, or can be retained in their lockable room cupboards. They have good guidance and as much freedom as possible in making decisions about spending, saving and budgeting. However, the records of their reward monies do not adequately show the balance of what is earned and the amounts that have been spent. As a result, this money is not properly accounted for.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people have a good understanding of how the organisation of the home promotes outcomes for them. They are given a written young people's guide when they arrive. From this they know things like how to complain, how much pocket money they should get according to their age, and what the rules are about smoking. However, the home's Statement of Purpose does not include details of the staff and their qualifications and wrongly gives the reader to understand that there are enough suitably qualified staff at the home. In addition, the statement has not been updated to consistently explain changes, such as the door alarms now used at night and the move to sleeping, as opposed to waking, night staff. The impact of these shortfalls is small because there have not been any new placements in the home and social workers and parents are aware of the actual staffing situation.

Young people are looked after by staff that are generally well inducted, supported and trained. Staff files and training and supervision records are well organised so that it is easy to check and monitor the home. Observations made of staff practice provide good evidence of staff commitment and competence in most areas. Young people clearly benefit from consistent staffing and rotas are tailored to provide them with frequent quality time with staff. Regular staff meetings and careful handovers ensure that young people get consistent care and always know what adults are there. In addition, young people can contact key workers off duty, for example, if they want the support of someone of the same gender. However, too few staff have the National Vocational Qualification at level three or equivalent in the care of children and young people. This shortfall has the potential to adversely affect the safety and welfare of young people, but is not doing so in practice. Training programmes for staff to gain professional childcare qualifications are being organised.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The differing and evolving individual needs of each young person are carefully monitored, responded to and met through the systems in place in the home. For example, daily logs, daily incentives goals, key worker sessions and young people's meetings are all utilised well overall to support young people to make clear progress in their learning, development, behaviour and independence. The manager and area manager keep most records and systems under review and make some effective changes which are communicated well to staff and young people. For example, staff recently received training on effective report writing. However, young people's monthly progress reports, risk assessments, review meetings, care plans and incident records are not currently well used as opportunities for young people to think about their lives and futures.

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
1	ensure that the home's Statement of Purpose covers all the matters listed in Schedule 1, in particular, the number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the home (Regulation 4(1), Schedule 1.5)	22/12/2010
29	ensure that there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably qualified persons working at the home (Regulation 25(1))	22/12/2010
27	ensure that there is a full employment history for all staff, with any gaps in employment explained. (Schedule 2.6)	22/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of medicines details how medicines are disposed of and to whom they are prescribed (NMS 13.2)
- ensure that fire drills include night time drills so that young people know how to evacuate at night (NMS 26.7/8)
- ensure that the record for complaints is utilised fully, including informal and external complaints, so that all complaints can be reviewed and the procedure's operation satisfactorily checked (NMS 16.6/7)
- ensure that the camping risk assessment is clearer about how child protection measures are implemented, and ensure that the hot water risk assessment is followed (NMS 26.2)
- make clearer to young people their right to have a medical examination and to write and have their views recorded following any restraint (NMS 22.13/14)
- ensure that each young person has a clear education history and personal education plan setting out the details of their educational achievements, needs and aspirations (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that young people are regularly consulted and involved in the content of their care plans, in particular that their views are shown in changes to their plans (NMS 2.5/6)
- ensure that records of young people's incentive reward monies are accurately kept, showing what is spent and the balances, and that young people sign their records (NMS 11.8)
- ensure that the Statement of Purpose and children's guide accurately describe the manner in which care is provided, specifically in relation to the use of door alarms at night. (NMS 1.1)