

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC429995
Inspector	Vicky Johnson
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Registered manager	Donna Marie Thorne
Date of last inspection	27/01/2014

Inspection date	22/10/2014
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Previous inspection	satisfactory progress
Enforcement action since last inspection	none

This inspection	
Overall effectiveness	good
Outcomes for children and young people	good
Quality of care	good
Keeping children and young people safe	good
Leadership and management	good

Overall effectiveness

Judgement outcome	good
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The outcomes for young people living at the home are good. Staff are enthusiastic about the work they do with the young people. The Registered Manager is committed to creating an accepting environment for young people to live in. Young people receive personalised care. The staff take their needs and ambitions into account, while also providing good, predictable boundaries. They also regularly consult with the young people about the running of the home. The views of the young people positively affect the staff's approach and shape their practice.

The Registered Manager is enthusiastic about the care the team provides. Staff develop relationships with the young people that are supportive and genuine. Practice is child focused and helps young people to develop their skills, make choices, and gain confidence. Records show the involvement of young people in their care through regular key work sessions and meetings.

Because of the commitment of the Registered Manager and the staff team, young people have made considerable progress from their individual starting points. Young people receive individualised support around their care needs. Staff provide guidance to help young people attend their education, consider their options and achieve. Young people also experience well-coordinated direction and support to meet their physical and emotional needs. The staff team are confident advocates for

young people and respond to their individual requirements. Young people are safe living in the home and their risk-taking behaviours have reduced significantly since the point of admission.

The Registered Manager is highly motivated to remedy any deficits in service delivery, to provide best practice and bring about change. Such arrangements strongly support the work with the young people and deliver purposeful child-centred practice.

There are three requirements and two recommendations as a result of this inspection to further improve practice.

Full report

Information about this children's home

The children's home is run by a private company and provides care and accommodation for up to four young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

Recent inspection history

Inspection date	Inspection type	Inspection judgement
27/01/2014	Interim	satisfactory progress
18/04/2013	Full	good
16/10/2012	Interim	good progress
13/06/2012	Full	good

What does the children's home need to do to improve further?

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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
32 (2001)	take reasonable precautions against the risk of fire, specifically that there is adequate signage of fire exit routes to provide adequate means of escape and, after consultation with the fire and rescue authority, take adequate precautions against the risk of fire to review the policy of wedging open fire doors (Regulation 32A (b))	03/12/2014
28 (2001)	maintain in respect of each child who is accommodated in the children's home a record in permanent form which includes the information, documents and records specified in Schedule 3, in particular the placement information record, up to	03/12/2014

	date care plan, and minutes of statutory reviews (Regulation 28(1)(Schedule 3))	
30 (2001)	ensure without delay that Ofsted is notified of any significant incident affecting a child's welfare and the recording of notifications are full and precise (Regulation 30 (1)).	03/12/2014

Recommendations

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

- ensure the aims and objectives of the Statement of Purpose are child focused and show how the service will meet outcomes for children, specifically the circumstances when the number of staff on duty will change (NMS 13.2)
- ensure following a notifiable incident under Regulation 30, the home makes direct contact with the responsible authority to discuss any further action that may need to be taken (NMS 24.4).

Inspection judgements

Outcomes for children and young people **good**

Young people make significant progress from the point of their admission. They develop in confidence and become more able to take responsibility for their own actions. Their competence and self-esteem improves, helping them to establish relationships that are more constructive. They meet with friends in the local area and travel independently with growing confidence. Young people also extend their life skills by completing household tasks such as cooking for themselves, doing laundry and budgeting. These achievements increase their personal resilience, instil a feeling of accomplishment and prepare them well for adult life.

Young people's educational outcomes are good. They achieve from the point of their admission, developing particular interests and a motivation to realise their potential. Some young people, whose complex backgrounds have meant they have missed schooling, are now starting to engage with home tutoring. Others who did not attend school previously have achieved GCSE results, have enrolled in college courses and are eager to succeed. Consequently, they are beginning to set goals for their future, and to plan with an emerging confidence in their potential.

Young people enjoy an active lifestyle and make good progress in developing an understanding of their own health needs. They participate in the general outdoor activities associated with helping to care for the range of animals the home has on site. The young people enjoy these responsibilities, benefiting from the routine and structure they provide. Such activities provide an opportunity to be nurturing and have a positive impact upon their emotional health and wellbeing. They also contribute to their physical health and encourage responsibility.

Young people become more self-aware about their behaviours and access the support on offer to help them manage their feelings. They begin to gain insight into their behaviour, and to make choices that are more positive. Some young people have developed considerably in their confidence to take charge of their own health needs. They seek out appropriate support and guidance on sexual health issues, take the initiative to seek treatment, and attend clinics independently. With increasing maturity, they become more able to reflect and engage less in risk-taking behaviour.

Young people benefit from the staff's efforts to facilitate contact with their birth families. Relationships have improved for some young people and they enjoy more frequent contact with their family. Some young people have re-established links with family members that have the potential to progress to overnight stays. They have also developed friendships since coming to live in the area. This contact helps to maintain their social networks and develops their social competence, which is essential when they move on to independent living.

Quality of care

good

Young people benefit from nurturing relationships with staff. The Registered Manager works hard to create a positive and accepting home for the young people. One social worker described it as a 'very nurturing environment'. Staff strive to create an atmosphere in which young people feel they belong. They focus upon the particular interests and talents of the young people to promote their individuality and develop their potential. Young people participate in activities such as going to the gym, horse riding, and baking. One young person successfully completed a placement on a farm and is keen to repeat this experience.

Young people's wishes and feelings are valued and considered essential to the running of the home. For example, young people's meetings happen weekly and staff discuss and take forward suggestions for improvement. Staff take an inclusive approach to the young people's meetings by considering ways to ensure the young people who are not able to attend receive this information. The Registered Manager displays a 'You said, We did' list in the kitchen to allow the young people to monitor the home's responses. Each month, staff share an aspect of the children's rights charter to develop an exchange of ideas with the young people about their rights. This imaginative approach to practice illustrates the commitment of the Registered Manager to listen to the views of young people, and to encourage their feelings of acceptance, value and choice.

The home tackles barriers to education effectively. Additional support is put in place in a timely way to meet the young people's individual needs. This encompasses all aspects of a young person's education, such as one to one support to develop their social skills and competence. Working relationships with education providers are also good. This ensures any issues or concerns are dealt with quickly, to provide a coordinated and united response to the young people's particular difficulties.

The arrangements for storing, administering and checking medication are appropriate and safe. The home also assesses the young person's ability to self-medicate and enables this wherever possible, encouraging individual responsibility, and independence. Access to specialist health services is good, and young people are consistently registered with general practitioners, opticians, and dentists. Regular key worker sessions help the young person to explore their need to maintain good sexual health and the potential consequences of making unsafe choices. These arrangements help to promote young people's health and increase their understanding of its importance.

Detailed and comprehensive residential care plans from the home are in place. Staff regularly update and monitor these plans in response to changes in the young people's lives. The care plans from the young people's placing authority are often not up to date and residential care plans therefore are sometimes not consistent with

them. Communication with social care professionals in developing and carrying out residential plans is a particular strength of the home. One social worker said, 'Everything is done through negotiation with myself and with the child'. The social worker stated clearly that she believed the young people have benefited significantly from their time at the home. Records show that young people themselves do contribute directly to these plans and staff regularly discuss the content with them. As a result, staff gain a deeper and more balanced understanding of the young person's needs.

The home is in a quiet, picturesque, rural location. Young people benefit from the remote setting and the outdoor activities it provides. Staff overcome the lack of direct public transport services by giving young people lifts. This ensures they attend education and maintain contact with their families and friends. This is carefully managed as part of their approach to promoting independence skills. The home offers a very comfortable environment for young people; material standards are high, with sufficient space available for group and individual activities. Fire arrangements are generally good. However, there are no fire exit signs on the floor where young people sleep or above the designated fire exits on the ground floor. The doors to these exits on the ground floor were observed to be wedged open. If a fire was to break out, the open doors would increase the speed at which it would spread. Additionally, the safe evacuation of the building may take longer than it might with better signs. This heightens the risk to young people.

Keeping children and young people safe good

The safety and wellbeing of the young people is at the centre of the staff's practice. Robust risk assessments are in place, which are thorough and individualised. Staff regularly review these assessments to ensure they are current and young people are kept safe and secure. Staff discuss any potential risks with young people within their individual key working sessions and praise positive behaviour choices made. There are no incidences of bullying, and only one incident of restraint since the last inspection. Once social worker commented upon this as evidence of the staff's ability to problem solve with the young people to reach a positive conclusion: 'They talk through things, work through things'.

Behaviour management is focused and progress is measured. Young people sign a working agreement, which contains clear and understandable expectations for behaviour, including a review of the 'rules' of the home. Staff evaluate these agreements with the young person, encouraging their understanding of set boundaries and increasing their participation. The home's use of sanctions is appropriate and proportionate. The young people also have opportunities to earn additional pocket money within an incentive scheme. Staff review the plans for each young person over a 28-day period to obtain trends and patterns of behaviours. The Registered Manager views this approach as central to developing the young people's sense of ownership.

Arrangements in place for the vetting of new staff are robust and effective. The Registered Manager is able to give a detailed account of the steps taken to ensure new staff members are suitable to work with children. These safe arrangements provide assurance that those who care for the young people are appropriately qualified and sufficiently trained to meet the young people's needs.

The Registered Manager has developed good relationships with outside agencies to safeguard the young people who live there. Since the last inspection, a rise in the number of occasions when young people are missing from the home, associated with specific young people's behaviour, has required frequent coordinated work with agencies. The Registered Manager and staff were responsive to this challenge, developing with the respective professionals a timely action plan to reduce risk. Staff are clearly aware of the full extent of their responsibilities to liaise with outside agencies and make attempts to locate the young people. Proactive safeguarding practice, which includes the young people, strengthens their sense of safety and wellbeing. One police officer, confirming this approach, said, 'I think their judgement is sound' and, 'They do work with the kids'.

Leadership and management

good

The Registered Manager is skilled, committed, suitably experienced and qualified to undertake the role of managing the home. She has been in post since July 2007. These arrangements will soon change as the Registered Manager will step down from the position and assume the role of Responsible Individual. Records show the young people and staff were made aware in advance of this change and had the opportunity to discuss what it would entail. Effective and detailed handover arrangements are in place with the prospective new manager, which provide consistency and familiarity for the young people. They ensure sound preparation for the role, therefore strengthening future management arrangements.

Quality assurance, evaluation, and providing a better service to young people are priorities. As a result, the requirements and recommendations from the last inspection are met. The Registered Manager also swiftly addresses the recommendations from independent monitoring visits and any suggestions for change form part of the team meeting agenda. They focus their approach to monitoring the quality of the service provided to young people and are driven to implement further improvements. The Registered Manager has a strong leadership style, which ensures the young people receive a good balance between encouragement and consistent, fair boundaries. In addition, the strong developmental ethos present within the home means that consultation with the young people is incorporated into the daily routines.

The Registered Manager is aware of the strengths and areas of potential development in the home. The locality risk assessment is comprehensive, illustrating

consultation with agencies and the specific risks individual to the home. Additionally, the Registered Manager identifies gaps in practice; ensuring staff have the appropriate training to address any shortfalls. For example, in response to episodes of challenging behaviour, the team explored the process and recording of restraint and introduced an improved method of recording. This ensured a consistent and systematic approach to recording throughout the home. Staff also received refresher training in behaviour management techniques.

Staff supervision happens regularly and is of a good quality. One staff member stated, 'This is good supervision'. A detailed admissions process is in place. Staff report the Registered Manager listens to their views and consults them about how they can best meet young people's needs. This happens on an individual basis and collectively in staff meetings. To admit young people safely, the Registered Manager completes individual risk assessments. Through this process, they maintain a clear focus upon the existing needs of the young people who live in the household. Once young people are admitted, staff actively chase outstanding information such as care plans and reviews from social work professionals. The home's Statement of Purpose does not completely describe the circumstances when the number of staff on duty within the home will change. In this respect it does not adequately describe the service the home provides to interested parties: professionals, parents, and young people.

Young people's information is extensive and very well organised. It clearly reflects the young people's experience of living in the home and the actions the staff take to meet their needs. There is a delay in notifying Ofsted of significant events surrounding the welfare of young people. Additionally, the recording of such events requires clearer and more comprehensive detail. The Registered Manager should also make direct contact with the responsible authority to discuss any further action that may need to be taken.

What inspection judgements mean

Judgement	Description
Outstanding	A service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements.
Good	A service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements.
Adequate	A service that only meets minimum requirements.
Inadequate	A service that does not meet minimum requirements.

Information 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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the framework of inspection for children's homes.