

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Fiona Parker
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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 is registered to provide accommodation and care for up to five boys aged between 11 and 17. If young people cannot be restored to their family environment or placed with foster carers they will be supported at the home until they are ready to move into more independent accommodation.

The ground floor has two lounges for the young people to use, although one doubles as a staff room and office. There is also a separate office, kitchen diner, utility room and a newly refurbished games room. Upstairs there are five single bedrooms, bathroom and shower room. There are two staff sleep-in rooms both upstairs. The home is surrounded by gardens and a driveway which provides ample parking space.

The home is close to a main thoroughfare into the city centre and local amenities are nearby.

There are currently five young people living in the home and four young people contributed to this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This is a key unannounced inspection to assess the home's compliance with key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters Outcomes. This inspection also reviewed the progress the home has made in meeting the one action and four recommendations from the previous inspection.

As a result of this inspection, this home is judged as satisfactory overall. There are many good and outstanding outcomes for young people. Due to the discrepancy between outcomes and accountable practice and compliant records, there are differing individual judgements. The overall judgement is reached taking into consideration the action and recommendations from the previous inspection are not fully met. There are also some shortfalls in important areas such as placement plans; physical intervention recording; evidencing the action taken on external complaints and the agreed strategies for challenging behaviour.

The quality of plans and records does not directly impact on the quality of young people's daily experiences. However, practice is not fully accountable in key areas, internal monitoring has not identified the shortfalls or fully driven improvement from the last inspection. The manager is very committed to making improvements and is seeking ways to ensure they can capture information and record practice as required by the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with a caring and committed staff team. Young people feel they are listened to, respected and treated as individuals. Young people themselves recognise this home provides them with some excellent opportunities for broadening their cultural experiences and maximising their potential. This home promotes equality and diversity well and is judged as good in this overall aspect.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection one action and four recommendations were raised. The action related to improving the assessment and care planning for each child. Although some improvement is noted the placement plans do not fully reflect the requirements. The recommendations related to improving the record keeping of children's needs and development; including safety measures in written risk assessments and making explicitly clear the role of police involvement in policy and practice. There has been some improvement in these areas but there remains the need for further improvement.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are supported to lead healthy lifestyles through good arrangements to promote their health from caring and committed staff. Staff prepare varied and nutritious meals which all enjoy together as sociable occasions. Young people can make choices about foods and prepare or cook meals depending on their level of independence and interest. Staff lead by example and remind young people about good manners at mealtimes to ensure meals are enjoyable times for all. Food is a regular topic of conversation and staff use the opportunities to increase young people's understanding of healthy foods, positive food choices and encouraging help with cooking. Older young people are supported to invite friends and cook meals. Young people say 'I get good food here' and other comments are meals are 'healthy meals' and staff are good at 'cooking'.

Young people are registered with appropriate health professionals to ensure they can access routine health checks. Appointments are made promptly and staff support young people to attend. The looked after children nurse regularly visits the home. This provides young people with opportunities to discuss key health issues in a group, for example, smoking, alcohol, sexual health and healthy eating. Young people can also speak with the nurse individually or attend groups in the community, if they wish to.

Staff work positively and pro-actively with health professionals and seek advice to inform their support of young people. A worker from the child and adolescent mental health service regularly meets with staff to discuss strategies and young people's progress. This also provides a link into any specialist referrals for young people. Young people are fully supported with their health needs and staff are very

knowledgeable about each individual. However, the written plans in place do not fully reflect every young person's needs, support and actions. This results in an action.

Effective arrangements are in place for administering, storing and recording any medication in the home. Arrangements are in place to safely dispose of unused medicines. Young people are assessed to self medicate where it is appropriate and are given the responsibilities in line with their skills. Appropriate risk assessments cover some potential risks but are not clear on the basis of the decision. A system is in place for non prescribed medicines, however, this has not been drawn up with advice from a health professional. In addition, staff also sometimes use the non prescribed medicines which is not part of an agreed protocol. These shortfalls do not directly impact upon young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people report they feel safe, well cared for and listened to. Young people are informed about their rights and can express their views with confidence, including making complaints. Young people say they can speak with staff in private if they want to, they enjoy privacy in the home, for example, in their rooms and when washing and changing. Young people feel staff respect their privacy and treat them with dignity.

Young people report they are not concerned about bullying, although records support there are sometimes physical fallouts, these are usually managed and young people will exercise the complaint process. Young people's complaints are treated seriously and follow agreed procedures. Some shortfalls are noted in the accurate recording of complaints involving the community. Although in practice good efforts are made to build relationships and resolve concerns, records do not reflect that appropriate action is taken and are misleading. Staff are pro-active in keeping young people safe, procedures are in place to work closely with the police if any young people are missing. This does not happen regularly and the reduction in absences noted supports the efforts staff make to engage positively with young people.

As noted at the previous inspection physical intervention is not used, although there is now a recent exception for younger children. Staff call on police support, although this is not frequent, it is not fully clear on the threshold for calling the police and whether there is a consistent understanding of this. In addition, the strategies for supporting each young person and all young people as a group are not fully clear in plans and risk assessments. Without the clarity in plans, policies and procedures it is not possible to determine whether the appropriate level of intervention is used and staff are suitably guided and supported to support young people. Records of restraints which have taken place do not fully meet the regulation. Due to these findings and recording shortfalls, practice is not fully accountable in some important areas.

The ethos of the home is for tolerance and respect, staff encourage positive

behaviours and problems are talked through for a resolution. Positive relationships support this approach and newly admitted young people quickly feel at home. Young people are clear on consequences and feel sanctions are mainly fair, although their views on this are not routinely captured in records.

Good arrangements are in place to test appliances and equipment, including fire equipment. Regular fire drills take place ensuring young people are physically safe and know evacuation procedures. Staff ensure visitors have reason to visit, each visit is recorded and visitors are monitored, if needed. Effective recruitment procedures ensure newly appointed staff are appropriately vetted and considered suitable to work with children. These measures support young people living in a safe home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people report positive relationships with staff members, they are clear on the key working arrangements and what they can expect. Staff are clear on their role but are also clear they are all here for every young person. This is supported by young people reporting they are happy to discuss any issues with any staff member. Young people benefit from regular visits from independent visitors and children's rights officers. This gives young people choices about who they talk to and broadens their opportunities to express any worries. Each individual young person is very well known and understood by staff. As a result young people feel and say they are very well supported.

Good arrangements are in place to support young people's education. There is a clear focus on supporting young people to maximise their educational opportunities, achieve within their potential and plan for the future. Young people report they are helped with revision and homework, they say they can work quietly on desks in their bedrooms. Regular liaison takes place with schools, education providers and services such as connexions.

Staff will advocate to ensure young people receive what they are entitled to and they contribute fully in education meetings. Due to the commitment and encouragement of staff, young people are working towards realistic positive outcomes of their choice. Young people are motivated and supported to achieve. Regular outings, visits and holidays broaden young people's knowledge and experiences. Young people are very positive about the experiences they have and recognise this is above and beyond what they may have received. One young person said 'this is the best home in (this area)'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs and how these are to be met on a day-to-day basis are understood and put in place in practice. The staff team are experienced and care for

young people intuitively. Statutory reviews take place as required and young people contribute their views with support from the home and local authority. Information on young people in the home is recorded in different places, in different documents and is not always in the depth which reflects the level of young people's complex needs. This minimises a comprehensive overview of young people's assessed needs, how these are met and the progress they make.

Young people are well supported to maintain significant and agreed relationships. Young people are clear on when they will see family and friends and report they are happy with the arrangements in place. Young people are consulted about matters in the home as individuals and as a group. Resident meetings take place and show young people can express themselves. For example, young people voiced they did not want agency workers to care for them. As a result timely changes were made to avoid using people not familiar with the young people. Young people can also express any frustrations about living in a group with the help of staff. This demonstrates young people are listened to and have a voice about important issues affecting them.

All attempts are made for young people to be suitably prepared to move to the home. Where unexpected changes mean young people need to be accommodated quickly, keeping to good practice is still exercised. Young people visit the home before they move in. Young people recently accommodated say they were able to visit first and things were explained to them. A visiting social worker said staff were very pro-active in supporting the young person and they did not need to prompt any actions. Young people quickly settle and feel welcome. Some young people positively express their wish to remain in the home. The majority of young people leave within planned arrangements and some who wish to, benefit from continued contact with the staff team into later years. This is positive practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported to increase their independence skills and learn in line with their age. There are daily expectations for helping others, washing, tidying rooms and contributing positively to living in a group. For older young people structured programmes are in place to plan and prepare young people for the future. Good practical opportunities are arranged for young people, for example, learning to change bulbs and plugs. Appropriate liaison with the local authority is in place for young people to progress formal pathway plans. Good support is in place.

Children enjoy living in a comfortable, clean and well-maintained home. All rooms are spacious and freshly decorated providing a welcoming environment. The home suitably blends into the neighbourhood with other homes. Any repairs and damage are promptly repaired to make sure young people continue to live to a very good standard. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms and choose the colour of their room. Young people's rooms reflect their own personality and contain their possessions reflecting appropriately their ages and interests. The games room is

popular and provides the space for activities and games such as table tennis. Young people are clearly proud of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

A suitable Statement of Purpose is available and sets out what interested parties can expect from the home. The current age range permitted is not accurately reflected. The Statement of Purpose specifies 'all records must be kept in an appropriate lockable filing cabinet'. The home has several places for storing files and although personal files are kept securely there is some potential for information kept on bookshelves to be accessed by young people. The children's guide is in a child-friendly format, contains useful information but requires some updating on age range.

Young people are cared for by a dedicated and committed staff team. The majority of the staff are long serving and experienced. The staff team are suitably qualified and have good opportunities for training and development in core areas such as safeguarding and physical intervention. There is a clear team and management structure and lines of accountability are also clear. Suitable supervision arrangements are in place, staff report they are happy in their work and feel positive and well supported.

Regulation 33 visits take place monthly and reports are submitted to Ofsted as required. The reports do not always reflect whether young people have been invited to contribute. There are a number of shortfalls in recording practices and accurately reflecting information on some elements of important practice identified in this inspection. This does not always show practice is accountable and in line with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. In addition, management monitoring has not identified these shortfalls.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good as a result of the positive outcomes young people experience in practice. Young people are treated with dignity and respect. They are fully understood as individuals and regularly contribute their opinions. Young people are informed about their rights and some have participated in sharing their views nationally. Young people comment very positively on the increase of the gender balance in the staff team. Excellent opportunities are in place to broaden opportunities and experiences, including visiting countries where there are individual connections. The ethos is to treat all young people fairly and staff lead by example encouraging tolerance and positivity towards others. Appropriate legislation underpins the policies and procedures of the organisation.

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
16	ensure a written record is made of any complaint, the action in response, and the outcomes of the investigation. In particular, this relates to accurately recording the complaints from neighbours (Regulation 24 (5))	30/11/2010
17	ensure within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record includes a description of the measure used, the effectiveness, and any consequence of the use of the measure (Regulation 17 (4) (c) and (f)	30/11/2010
17	prepare and implement a written policy, referred to as a behaviour management policy, which sets out the measures of control, restraint and discipline which may be used in the children's home. In particular, this relates to clarifying the circumstances in which it is appropriate to call police assistance (Regulation 17 (2) (a))	30/11/2010
2	ensure each child has a placement plan setting out how, on a day-to-day basis, he will be cared for, his welfare safeguarded and promoted; the arrangements made for his health care and education and the arrangements made for contact with his parent, relatives and friends. Keep the plan under review and revise as necessary (Regulation 12 (1) (a)(b)(c) and (2)	30/11/2010
34	establish and maintain a system for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6. (Regulation 34 (1))	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- follow qualified medical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non prescription 'household' medicines to children. In addition, make clear the arrangements for any staff use of household medicines (NMS 13.11)
- encourage children to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them if possible in records kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
- ensure risk assessments identify the action to be taken to reduce risks. In particular, this relates to guiding staff on the agreed strategies for individuals and the group of young people, where required (NMS 26.2)
- ensure the Statement of Purpose and children's guide accurately describes what

the home sets out to do. In particular, the age range of young people is consistent with the registration certificate and the circumstances police support is used (NMS 1.1)

- ensure each child has a permanent private and secure record. In particular make sure all potential individual and personal information pertaining to children and staff is securely kept (NMS 35.1)
- ensure Regulation 33 reports evidence young people have been provided with the opportunity to meet the visitor (NMS 32.2)