

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 home provides care for up to seven young people, of either gender, aged from seven to 17 years.

The house is detached and set in its own grounds in a residential area near to the town. Public transport links, as well as shops and leisure facilities, are easily accessible. There are six bedrooms for the young people, one of which is a double room. This would be used for siblings. The accommodation also includes a lounge, kitchen/dining room, games room and two staff offices.

Five young people live in the home and four took part in the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this full, unannounced inspection, the key national minimum standards in all the outcome areas are considered. The one action made at the last inspection is commented on in the improvement section of this report.

Young people receive an outstanding level of care from an experienced and consistent staff group. The Registered Manager provides excellent leadership to enable staff to work as a team. Overall the management team are enthusiastic, competent and give an exceptional level of support to the staff team in their work with the young people.

Robust monitoring systems and highly effective care practices ensure the young people are cared for safely and their individual needs are met. A strength of the home is the holistic way in which they involve and work with other professionals, in particular health and education. This approach significantly benefits the welfare and well-being of the young people.

The accommodation is homely and well maintained. School is an accepted part of the daily routine of the home. Education is exceptionally well promoted and young people's diverse interests are actively encouraged by staff. Celebrations of achievements are evident and young people thrive in a positive home environment. Most of the young people have lived here for over two years and consider it to be a family home. Young people consider they are cared for properly and they really like the staff who look after them.

Two recommendations have been made to further promote the well-being of the

young people. These relate to replacement of some furnishings and for 80% of staff to achieve a relevant childcare qualification.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the provider was asked to ensure records show the effectiveness and consequences of the use of sanctions. The Registered Manager has introduced systems to ensure these matters are always considered. Records show the sanction record is regularly monitored to ensure the systems are effective in practice.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent advice about healthy eating. Staff encourage young people to eat a varied and balanced diet. Snacks, including fresh fruit, are freely available in the home.

Young people have the opportunity to shop, prepare and make meals, which helps them to learn skills for independence. Young people say they are listened to about their food choices and they enjoy their meals. The home has a suitably-furnished kitchen/dinning room. Mealtimes are very social and inclusive occasions where the events of the day and activities are discussed.

The health needs of young people are extremely well met. Young people's individual health needs are known to staff and comprehensive health plans are in place. Young people are registered with the doctor, dentist and optician. This ensures routine health monitoring occurs. Comprehensive partnership working with health professionals is part of the home's holistic work with young people. Strong links with health agencies provide young people with exceptionally good advice and guidance. This includes education about personal health and hygiene matters.

Staff have guidance for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medicines. Records are accurate and demonstrate staff have a clear understanding of the process. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff fully understand the need to keep young people safe from harm and take their responsibilities very seriously. They know how to respond in the event of any allegation or concern about a young person's safety. Staff receive training to assist them to care for and to promote the welfare of young people, for example, if concerns arise from sexual exploitation. Young people say they feel safe living in this home and that staff look after them very well.

The home's contact with various professional agencies significantly benefits the well-being of the young people. For example, the fire authority provide fire safety awareness training to the young people. Other agencies discuss matters, such as, personal safety and also drug and alcohol misuse. Young people talk routinely about the wealth of support and guidance they receive in relation to keeping safe.

Young people have an individual bedroom which provides them with their own personal space. Most of the young people have a mobile phone and all have access to a telephone in the home, to enable private calls to be made. Confidentiality is managed effectively and personal records are stored securely.

The home's complaints procedure is known to young people and gives them the opportunity to raise any issues with which they are unhappy. Any complaint is taken seriously and dealt with quickly by the Registered Manager. Consultation systems are robust and allow young people to have their views and opinions heard. Young people like living in this home, they consider staff listen to them and look after them properly.

Young people confirm there is no bullying in the home at this time. Staff are quick to deal with and challenge any incidents of this nature. Individual work is undertaken to educate young people that bullying is wrong.

Good procedures exist should young people go missing from the home. Staff fully record unauthorised absences, with details of the action taken to try to ensure the young person's safe return.

Staff promote a positive culture within the house which includes rewards and incentives for young people. There is a really strong emphasis on celebrating achievements and an ethos of respect in a home where young people are proud of their successes. For example, education success is fully recognised.

Staff receive support and training to assist them to deal properly with challenging behaviour, including the appropriate use of physical intervention. Very clear behaviour management strategies, together with professional advice and risk assessments, assist staff in their work with the young people.

Young people like it that the staff treat them fairly and say 'there is no favouritism'. Thorough monitoring of the home's records shows the Registered Manager is keen to maintain effective and appropriate disciplinary measures for young people.

The house and grounds are well maintained and staff understand the need to keep a safe home environment. Health and safety monitoring is comprehensive and relevant safety checks of equipment in the home are routinely carried out, to ensure this is safe to use. Young people and staff are aware of the fire evacuation procedures and know what to do in the event of a fire in the home.

Thorough recruitment and employment procedures are in place which help to confirm staff are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have excellent levels of individual support from staff, including that of a key worker. Staff provide very good role models and use a range of interventions to raise young people's confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Young people receive care that suits their specific needs. For example, significant advice and support are given about education, health and cultural issues.

Young people talk very positively about the time spent with staff. They comment on the support they receive to do the things they want to do. Staff ensure young people have access to activities and services that are available to other young people. Their hobbies and interests, such as swimming, dancing and involvement in sport, are actively encouraged.

All young people attend school. There is a highly-motivated and positive staff group whose approach is to value education for the young people. Staff seek for them to have the same life chances and opportunities as others to enable them to achieve their aspirations. Young people regularly receive awards and rewards from school and the home for their schoolwork and excellent school attendance levels.

Staff encourage young people to take an interest in issues worldwide and the local community. For example, young people took part in a sponsored run in aid of an overseas earthquake appeal.

The home has a wide range of facilities to support the young people's learning, such as books, board games and quiet areas in the house. Young people have access in the home to a computer with internet access and can use this for homework or in leisure time.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Placement plans identify clearly young people's individual care needs. Plans are very informative and monitored so that extremely good outcomes are achieved for the young people. Staff are particularly knowledgeable and familiar with the plans which significantly support them in their work with the young people. Young people, according to their age and ability, are involved fully in the care planning process.

A very settled group of young people currently live in this home. Most have lived in the home for over two years. Young people want to stay here and say this is the best placement they have had. For some it has enabled them to remain with siblings which they feel is very important and means a great deal to them.

The home has robust and well-established systems to review young people's care

and placement plans. The home provides very thorough and informative reports for young people's review meetings. Staff actively encourage young people to attend the review meeting and have a say about their placement and future care. Young people say they are able to give their views and these are taken account of in the meeting. Outcomes are noted on young people's files to show any changes to care plans and the action staff need to take as a result of the review.

Staff encourage young people to make choices about contact with family and friends in line with their placement plans. Staff support fully young people to maintain contact so that they continue to have positive links with those that are important to them outside of the home. As appropriate, young people have internet access to social networking sites, usually through their mobile phone. This allows young people to maintain friendships in a way that is an accepted part of their lifestyle and within their peer group.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned way. Written and verbal information provides young people with details about the care and routines in the home.

Young people's views are valued and there are many opportunities for them to have their say. Consultation and communication with young people are areas of strength in the home. Staff empower young people to make informed decisions about their life and to influence the way the home is run. Young people are asked their opinions about aspects of the running of the home, for example, decoration of the house, menus and activities. This level of consultation significantly helps to improve young people's quality of life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to learn and develop skills to help them as they move towards leaving care. Very good advice and support is given about educational opportunities and practical matters, such as housekeeping, cooking and budgeting money. Staff view their role as that of a good parent and ensure young people are well-prepared for adulthood.

Young people are confident and enthusiastic about the skills they learn, particularly cooking and shopping. None of the young people are of an age to have a formal Pathway Plan in respect of leaving care. Independent living plans developed by the home are discussed with the young people and include information and guidance relevant to their age and understanding.

Young people enjoy very homely accommodation that is decorated and furnished to a good standard. The home environment is relaxed and welcoming. Recent refurbishment of the home includes replacement house windows, new bathroom suite and power shower, and some new beds for young people. This improves the appearance of the home and provides comfortable furniture for the young people.

However, the carpet on the staircase and landing is worn in places and there is a lack of wardrobe space for the young people. The Registered Manager confirms a new carpet is on order and recognises the need for additional bedroom furniture.

The house is spacious and facilities in the home provide young people with their own bedroom for privacy and the option to personalise them, which reflects their individuality. Communal and private areas in the home allow young people the opportunity to spend time with others or by themselves.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Statement of Purpose and young person's guide to the service contain clear and detailed information about the home and facilities. This enables young people, their families and others involved with the home to understand how young people are looked after.

The home is exceptionally well-managed by a competent Registered Manager who provides excellent leadership to the staff team. Currently, two senior staff support the Registered Manager in his work and oversee the running of the home in his absence. The management group is highly motivated, enthusiastic and fully committed to the improvement of the service they provide to the young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff group provide excellent role models for young people in relation to values and attitudes in life. Young people are treated as individuals and their assessed needs are very well considered.

Young people are looked after by a consistent and knowledgeable staff team who provide them with continuity of care. Staffing levels are appropriate to the needs of the young people. Staff receive training to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. This includes training to meet the more specific needs of the young people, for example, valuing diversity and life story work. An ongoing programme of training is in place for the recommended 80% of staff to achieve an appropriate childcare qualification.

Staff are very responsive to, and understand the care needs of, the young people. The ethos of the home is to provide young people with a nurturing and supportive environment in order for them to reach their potential. Young people want to live in this home, they get on exceptionally well with staff and consider it to be a 'family' home.

Young people are comfortable and at ease with the staff. The good humoured banter between them is evident. Overall the atmosphere is relaxed and the relationship between the young people and staff is excellent with firm but fair boundaries.

Comprehensive management systems help to ensure the home runs to the benefit of

the young people. The Registered Manager monitors the paperwork in the home and also staff care practice. Monthly reports from an independent visitor to the home contribute to the very effective running of the service.

Young people's files contain all the information required by the standards and regulations. Information from other records held in the home is appropriately cross referenced into these individual files. This gives young people a clear record of their history in the home. Files are in good order and are stored securely to protect confidentiality.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all parts of the home are suitably furnished, in particular, that young people have sufficient wardrobe space and that the staircase and landing floor covering is in good order (NMS 24.1)
- ensure a minimum of 80% of care staff have the appropriate NVQ level 3 care award or equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)