

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

The home is a semi-detached family house located within an established residential community. It is within easy distance of recreational, educational and health facilities.

The communal areas of the home include a lounge/diner, kitchen, bathroom, lean-to and a garden. Each young person has their own bedroom. There is a staff sleeping-in room, which is also the staff office.

The home offers services and care for up to two young people from 10 years to 17 years of age with emotional or behavioural difficulties. It is part of a larger organisation operating a number of children's homes in the local area.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full unannounced key inspection. Two young people are living in the home. They were present during the inspection and helpfully contributed to the process. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as good with some outstanding features. Young people receive an individualised care package that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to their changing needs and effectively keep them healthy and safe. The home is well decorated and maintained providing a very homely environment in which young people are nurtured and enabled to develop. The home is accepted into its local neighbourhood and young people regularly access local facilities.

The registered person provides clear and informed leadership to an established, well-trained staff team thereby sustaining a very good quality of overall service. Staff are confident about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to effectively address the care needs of the young people they look after.

There are no actions or recommendations arising from this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection no actions were generated. The registered person was recommended to ensure a fire drill is held at night in each 12 month period. This has been achieved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy social mealtimes. They can sit and eat wholesome varied meals with their carers in the home's kitchen-diner. Staff demonstrate a very good understanding of what makes a balanced diet and awareness about nutritional issues. This along with prominent visual prompts to encourages young people with healthy eating. Menu planning is imaginative and includes culturally diverse food and many opportunities for trying new dishes. Young people are actively encouraged to help prepare menus and cook meals both for enjoyment and as a component of independence skill building.

Comprehensive records confirm that the medical and health needs of young people are documented within specific health files in addition to their placement plans, confirming that an active role is being taken by staff in promoting and monitoring good health and well-being. The responsible person has developed policies that promote safe practice for all aspects of medication, including thorough administration and recording and the use of homely remedies.

Accident recording systems effectively enable the registered person to monitor any concerning or emerging patterns relating to the behaviour and health of young people. Staff are regularly trained in first aid, which enables young people to receive informed help in the event of an accident.

Young people presently residing at the home confirm that they are encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Also that their medical needs are well met because staff ensure health related appointments are kept and support is provided with visits to general practitioners.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people reside in a homely safe environment where they are treated with respect by their carers. Their privacy is enhanced by the provision of lockable personal space and safe bathing facilities. Confidentiality is promoted by trained staff knowing how and with whom they can share information. All of the home's records are kept secure when not in use.

Safeguarding young people is promoted by the operating procedures and policies developed by the registered person. These fully comply with regulatory requirements and promote good practice in all areas of child protection including countering bullying, effective behaviour management and dealing with missing young persons. Staff are trained to be aware of the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board, including how to recognise signs of abuse and respond decisively to any allegations about adults or peers. Staff receive regular statutory and specialist training that equips and informs their care practice. The home has in place practical

systems for reporting significant events to relevant authorities including the regulator.

The management of young people by care staff is principally through the affirmation of acceptable behaviour, having sufficient and consistent staffing and by staff being explicit with them about behavioural expectations. Young people are treated with care and respect by the staff team. This nurturing practice is rewarded by good behaviour with a minimal need for the use of sanctions or physical behavioural controls. Staff receive training in behaviour management, which includes the safe use of physical restraint should it be needed. Training is refreshed annually and any incidents are evaluated by the home's manager. Young people are always asked for their views in such cases to improve the transparency and effectiveness of staff practice and to encourage their self-reflection.

Potential dangers to young people are identified by the production of a wide range of risk assessments relating to all aspects of safety in the living environment, such as the risk from fire and hazards, those from young people's behaviour and recreational activities. Risk assessments are well recorded and reviewed regularly to take into account any changes to routine, environment and staffing levels at the home.

The concerns and complaints of young people are taken very seriously. This is demonstrated by most everyday concerns being addressed effectively long before they become a complaint. Grumbles are noted during young peoples meetings and young people are asked to reflect on the cause and resolution of these. There is an effective complaint policy and procedure that is summarised in the young person's guide. Young people can access independent advocates to make their views known. Details of these are posted on the notice boards and in the young person's guide.

To help keep young people safe the home applies effective systems for monitoring all visitors to the home. Key information from staff personnel files made available for this inspection confirmed a robust, safe selection and recruitment process for all staff working in the home. Visitors to the home are not permitted unsupervised access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are well cared for by staff who practically demonstrate their understanding and awareness of child development. The home cares for two young people who, despite differences in demeanour, present similar needs for consistency of support. This is achieved through the use of explicit behavioural boundaries and positive adult nurturing within a safe, protected, homely environment. Young people consequently receive a very good level of care based on their individually assessed needs

Young people continue to develop their confidence and practical abilities by being supported with a wide variety of in-house, community-based activities that assist

self-awareness, the development of identity and improved age-appropriate self-esteem. They are helped to understand and respect difference and diversity by being exposed to positive images and messages about equality and diversity.

The children's home is well established in its urban setting and has developed a positive relationship with immediate neighbours and the wider community in which it is set. Young people have local friends who are permitted to visit the home. Young people access local education and recreational facilities.

At this home young people can access ongoing education and age-appropriate interest-led learning while formal community education placements are arranged. In the interim period young people are supported by a qualified teacher on a formal, if reduced academic timetable supported by informative, up-to-date education plans.

Young people are actively supported by staff with their education and vocational needs, both in the home and in formal placements. This level of involvement assists young people make progress when trying to integrate and achieve their full potential whether academically, socially or as part of their preparation for adulthood. Care staff work effectively with local colleges and other educational organisations to ensure young people are practically supported to access educational courses developing upon their known interests, abilities and talents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Care planning is effective because young people are provided with placement plans that describe how the placing authority's care plan for the young person will be developed and monitored while they live at the home.

Placement plans identify summarised health and education plan details and, how outcomes will be achieved. This helps management and staff to evaluate how effective their practice is. Individual case files confirm that young people's progress is independently reviewed within the statutory time periods to ensure that the outcomes are being addressed and that the placement continues to be in the young person's best interest. Young people actively contribute to their meetings and this is fully recorded. Key workers' reports are shared with placing authorities confirming regular and active liaison between the placement and placing authority.

Contact between young people and their families is fully promoted where legally permitted. Placement plans and case file records make explicit the authorised arrangements for contact between each young person, their family, friends and professional workers such as social workers. Where practical, family members can visit the home, and often make compliments about the care being provided.

The home's records and direct observation confirms that young people are active contributors to the daily decision-making processes. Formal and informal discussion between staff and young people takes place when considering any issues that affect

daily routines. Key work sessions focus upon specific child-related issues and how feedback from young people can be safe and meaningful and implemented. Interaction between staff and young people reveals a relaxed setting where the participation and involvement of young people is valued and used to influence care provision.

Staff meeting minutes confirm that a consistent, child-centred, safety-conscious approach within clear and confirmed parameters forms the basis for the home's practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with practical help and good informed advice for making the transition towards independence. They are encouraged to develop their capacity to self-help and to improve practical social skills such as the importance of good hygiene, how to budget with personal allowances, how to shop and to look after their own belongings and clothes. The importance of independence skill development is recognised by the home having systems that formally audit each young person's acquisition of practical skills. Some skills, for example training in basic food hygiene for young people, have been certified along with staff training.

Pathway plans succinctly record how young people are helped to prepare for their future and from whom they will receive support. Young people are able to discuss their future moves with confidence.

The children's home provides young people with a safe, well-maintained and comfortable environment in which they feel cared for and safe.

The home is located on a housing estate and is not conspicuous. Very positive relationships with neighbours and the neighbourhood are reported and no complaints have been received to contradict this. The home is functionally located within local access of other registered person's homes and the local secondary school.

The home is decorated and furnished throughout to a generally good standard which provides a comfortable and safe environment for young people to live in. It is very homely in appearance and reflects the likes, interests and personality of young people living there. The home is clean and well maintained although somewhat well used in some communal areas. The home works very well with the physical resources it has.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Statement of Purpose includes all of the information prescribed by schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations and provides its readers with an accurate and up-

to-date record about the service being provided for young people. The young person's guide has been subject to ongoing review, to ensure that it is both practical and a true representation of what it is like to live at the home.

Young people are very well supported by their small team of competent and well qualified staff who practically demonstrate their commitment to providing safe and consistent care. Staff fully recognise the vulnerability of the young people being looked after and sensitively balance how they are supervised within the home and with their access to the wider community.

Staff are fully supported by access to regular management supervision, team meetings and professional training. Staff have attended all statutory training and additional courses to further develop their skills and provide informed care for young people. Staff respond positively to clear management they receive and are empowered to contribute positive ideas for enhancing the quality of life for individual young people.

The daily rota for the home confirms that the staff complement is as currently detailed by the Statement of Purpose. Any actual shortfalls are covered initially by house staff or senior staff to reduce the potential for disruption to routine care or levels of support. Arrangements for safe one-to-one work with young people are regularly reviewed and addressed by the home's risk assessments.

There is a robust system for the monitoring of the home by the regulation 33 visitor who actively seeks the views of young people. The reports' findings are always used to improve the service. A functional development plan outlines the changes anticipated in the running of the home over the next 12 months to ensure ongoing improvement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The particular level of detail in the children's placement plans, case files and daily recording documents identifies that staff are aware of the particular needs of children and the appropriate actions needed to consistently and fully support these learning and personal needs. Young people are helped to learn, talk about and understand equality and diversity issues. The registered provider has specific information available for children of different ethnicity. Equality issues are a high priority area for this service and evidence for this is imbedded in day-to-day recording and practice and the positive multicultural images and notices around the home.

Comprehensive and sensitive recording within daily records and individual young person's case records confirms that the home is providing a very good quality of care. Young people confirm by their comments and behaviour that they are very satisfied with the care they receive.