

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin
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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 one of five children's homes owned by a private company. It is registered to provide care for two young people of either sex between the ages of eight and 17 years with emotional or behavioural difficulties. However, the home only provides care for one young person at any one time, unless the two children are siblings, and it is considered appropriate for them to share a bedroom. Admissions to the home are usually planned but emergency admissions are accepted.

The company operates the home and the Registered Manager is responsible for another two children's home close by. Each home has a deputy house manager who manages the day-to-day running of the home with the Registered Manager retaining overall responsibility.

The home is a semi-detached property built in the 1970s and is situated in a quiet residential area on the outskirts of a city. The home is in close proximity to a range of shops, local leisure facilities and amenities. The property is fully equipped and furnished on two floors. One young person was resident at the time of the visit and participated in the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a key unannounced inspection of the service to assess compliance with the national minimum standards for children's homes. The home was assessed under the headings of Every Child Matters. Being healthy, staying safe, economic well-being and positive contribution received a judgement of good and enjoying and achieving and organisation received a judgement of outstanding. Overall the home was judged as good.

The inspection focused on arrangements to meet young people's individual needs, to safeguard their welfare and protect them from harm, to ensure they have a say in their day-to-day care and to ensure they live full and enjoyable lives. The inspection also considered how the home is managed and how staff are supported. Relationships between staff and young people are extremely positive. Young people's health needs are well met and they are encouraged and supported to pursue their education, so that they can achieve and make plans for their future.

No actions or recommendations were made at this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have a varied, nutritious diet. Food is freshly prepared and meets the health and cultural needs of young people. One young person stated 'the food is nice and staff always offer me healthy snacks and they help me with baking cakes.' Staff help young people to understand the importance of a healthy diet and lifestyle, which increases the likelihood of young people maintaining healthy eating habits and lifestyles in adulthood.

Staff draw up clear and comprehensive health plans for each young person. They ensure young people attend appointments with doctors, dentists and opticians. They organise and provide support for them in attending their annual health review and any meetings with external health specialists. These practices assist young people to meet their health targets and maintain good health.

At present no young people are taking any prescribed medication and as such this standard was not fully inspected. However, the staff are all trained in administering medication and would follow the homes robust policies and procedures. The records evidenced that staff acquire written permission from someone with parental responsibility for the administration of non-prescription medication or first aid for all young people. As a result, young people's welfare is safeguarded when staff are administering medicines and providing treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's right to privacy is respected. Bedrooms are fitted with a lock and young people are provided with their own key, which means that others cannot enter their bedroom and that their personal belongings are secure. Comments from young people confirm that staff knock before entering their room.

There are appropriate behaviour management arrangements. The organisation provides staff training in relation to de-escalation of incidents and the use of physical intervention as a last resort. There have been no restraints recorded since the last inspection. Individual behaviour management plans are produced, to ensure poor or negative behaviour is addressed in a consistent manner. An incentive scheme is used to encourage young people to reach behavioural targets and to follow daily routines. One young person stated 'yes I think the rules are fair' also confirming that 'I have not had any sanctions only rewards and I can earn an extra £1 a day'. Staff are aware of the potential for bullying and monitor interactions between young people. However, as this is a single placement and the young person is not in school there

are no issues of bullying noted at the present time.

Since the last inspection there have been no occasions when young people are found to be missing without consent. However, if a young person was missing, staff confirmed that they would ensure their concerns are reported promptly to the police and notifications are made to parents (where appropriate) and placing social workers. On their return to the home one-to-one time would be spent discussing protective behaviours with young people and also exploring the reasons why young people left the home.

A young person confirmed in discussion that they know what to do in the case of a fire and had undergone a full evacuation since admission to the home. Staff receive annual refresher guidance about the home's fire safety procedures. Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are tested on a regular basis and fire evacuation drills are undertaken with both staff and young people. The home's fire safety risk assessment was recently reviewed. All other health and safety issues were found to be in order.

Young people are safeguarded by robust staff recruitment procedures. All required checks are undertaken prior to staff commencing work in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

A member of staff stated: 'The home is working very well in supporting and making the young people feel their lives are important to them and us.' Each young person is supported by a key worker. The key worker draws up plans for the young person's stay and monitors the plans to ensure they are implemented. They assist young people to set individual goals and support them to reach their targets. Staff ensure extra support is provided for young people to access external services which can provide additional support for their needs. These practices ensure young people are provided with individual support when they need it.

The local authority education team for looked after children works closely with the home. Along with the home's staff, they provide educational support to young people. Staff undertake direct work with the young people in the home to support them with learning when they are not attending school. Staff in the home build good links with schools and acquire information to enable them to provide practical support for young people's education. Young people have access to books, computers and learning materials in the home. This work supports young people to be active participants in education and to understand the importance of education for their futures.

Activities and trips are planned in advance in consultation with young people and these offer the opportunity for them to develop their particular talents and build stronger relationships with staff. A member of staff stated 'The young people try to keep occupied by doing activities and they get recognised by having a reward.' As a consequence, young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop

confidence in their skills and are supported and encouraged by staff to enjoy their lives.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with written information about the service and facilities when they are admitted to the home. Placement agreements are informed by an assessment of need and the collation of relevant historical and current referral information. Detailed placement plans and risk management strategies are produced to develop care arrangements. Plans are also reviewed on a regular basis and incorporate the necessary level of detail, to ensure that needs will always be addressed.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with their families. Individual plans include contact arrangements and are developed in consultation with young people. A young person stated 'staff talk to me about visiting my family', also confirming that contact visits are supported by staff.

Young people are consulted about care arrangements. During regulation 33 visits, staff who visit the home speak with young people and listen to their views about the care that they receive. Regular residents meetings are held, during which young people are encouraged to make suggestions or to raise any concerns. Young people are consulted about and made aware of their individual placement plan. One young person stated 'the staff listen to me and talk to me about my care'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The daily life of the home ensures that young people are able to develop the knowledge and skills which will help them prepare for adulthood. For example, young people are encouraged to keep their own rooms clean and tidy, plan menus, shop for and cook meals. Staff communicate well with placing authorities to ensure that pathway plans are in place at an appropriate stage in the young person's placement.

Young people benefit from living in a homely environment. The home is suitably located in a residential area and provides young people with an appropriate amount of private and communal space. It is comfortably furnished, well maintained internally and externally and is clean and tidy. A young person commented that 'I am personalising my room which is really nice.' Both the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair, with an ongoing maintenance programme.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The service provides young people, their families and placing social workers with good written information about how the home operates, in the form of a detailed Statement of Purpose and young person's guide. Both documents are regularly reviewed and updated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Policy, training and care practice helps young people to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, age and religion are valued. Staff and the service are able to meet young people's diverse needs in everyday life, while they reside in the home. Staff tackle discrimination and support young people to speak up about discrimination. This work supports young people to develop self-esteem and confidence in their identity.

Young people are cared for by a staff team who are increasing in experience and skills. Staff benefit from regular staff meetings and the staff support processes are strengthened by receiving regular formal supervision, which helps them to develop their knowledge on the diverse aspects of care. Staff receive a programme of training to ensure they are able to maintain the safety of the young people. The home remains committed to providing National Vocational Qualification training to all staff. Currently, 100% of care staff hold this qualification.

Management systems are effective in monitoring the work of the home and the standard of care that is given to young people. The manager checks and signs all documents regularly and produces reports on the findings. An independent person visits the home every month to complete checks on the care of young people and reports of these visits are made available to the manager and to Ofsted. These reports confirm that any issues identified are attended to promptly, to ensure that standards of care remain high.

Young people's files and other records are well maintained and secure. Records are appropriately cross referenced and confirm the good care practices that are evident in the home. Young people access their records when undertaking key worker sessions and this is evidenced further in the records, by young people's signatures.