

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Debbie Foster
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 a single occupancy placement to young people aged 11 to 17 years who have a history that encompasses placement breakdowns, emotional and/or behavioural problems.

This is a domestic dwelling, with a kitchen, dining lounge, two single bedrooms, one with an en-suite, bathroom and office.

It is situated near to local shops, schools, health, leisure and employment facilities. There is a bus route servicing the local area and the town centre, which is three miles away.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection focusing upon 25 key national minimum standards (NMS) under the Every Child Matters outcomes for children and young people.

The six actions and four recommendations made on the last inspection in January 2009 have also been checked to see if they have been implemented.

The health of young people is promoted well, there is a focus on promoting healthy eating and supporting young people to attend health care appointments. Good work is occurring to assist young people to keep themselves safe.

Staff have forged good links with other professionals to support young people. An immediate response by the home to identify suitable, further education and a structured activity programme for the summer is very beneficial to the young person. The placement has been made without the local authority providing some key documents which identify how an individual young person is to be cared for. These include the looked after children's care plan, Personal Education Plan and a pathway plan. Although, young people are developing some independence skills appropriate to their age which will help them in adulthood, this is not sufficient to meet all their needs.

The home has recently been refurbished, is decorated and furnished to a good standard, providing a domestic environment. Young people are consulted well and make decisions about their lives which empowers them and builds their self confidence.

Staff do have opportunities to undertake a wide range of mandatory and other training relating to current child care practices. However, the target set in the NMS, of 80% of the work force achieving the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in caring for children and young people is not quite met. However, good progress is being made in this area. Good internal monitoring systems are in place to check young people living at the home are well cared for.

Young people made some contributions to the inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The setting has taken steps to address the majority of issues.

Healthy, wholesome and nutritional meals are provided to young people to assist in promoting a healthy lifestyle. Behaviour is being managed positively in the home to try and ensure young people behave in a socially acceptable way. The required information is being recorded when sanctions are being made. Educational resources and programmes have been identified and are being put in place for young people to support them further with their education. The plan of care is being implemented and the daily recordings demonstrate and reflect that the care needs of the young people are being met.

The home has been fully refurbished since the last inspection, all furnishing and decoration are in good repair and clean to provide a suitable environment for young people to live in. The children's guide includes the Ofsted name, address and telephone number and information on the use of sanctions which, is required by the regulations. Refresher training in safe guarding children has been provided to ensure staff are suitably trained to keep young people safe.

The monitoring systems in place have picked up on deficiencies and the action to rectify or address them has been taken. This is to ensure the care delivered to young people is being evaluated and improved further where identified.

The target of 80% of staff do not yet hold the NVQ level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Although, good progress is being made to achieve this.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a healthy and well balanced diet and they make choices for the week's menu. The menu includes varied and diverse meal options. Staff support young people to shop, prepare snacks and meals to assist in living a healthy lifestyle. A young person said that they are eating more healthily with good support from the staff. A young person made fresh fruit smoothies during the inspection.

Staff with other professionals have identified quickly the health needs of young people and the necessary services are provided straight away. This ensure that young people's health is well promoted and maintained. Young people are always supported to attend health appointments when required. A range of healthcare professionals are being accessed by young people to meet their individual needs. These include attending a stop smoking clinic, opticians and dentist.

There are clear practices and procedures in place to ensure that young people's medication is administered, stored and recorded safely. Monitoring of medication stocks takes place within the home. Staff are trained on how to administer medication, first aid, sexual health matters and alcohol and drugs awareness.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Records are securely stored and information confidentially handled. Young people said staff respect their privacy by knocking before entering their bedrooms. Young people have keys to their own bedroom.

Staff have made young people aware of the complaints procedure and said they support young people to complain where this is needed. The home has received one complaint since the last inspection from a person in the community. The records show that prompt action has been taken to resolve the complaint and the outcome recorded, which indicates their concerns are taken seriously.

Measures have been put in place to try keep young people safe and to promote their welfare. All staff have received safeguarding training and are aware of the procedures. The procedures are available for staff to refer to and use.

Young people are protected from bullying, through the home's policies, procedures and the practice of the staff. Staff are aware of how to deal with bullying situations. Young people are aware that bullying is not acceptable as set out in the young people's guide. There is no bullying occurring in the home or in the community currently.

Staff are aware of the procedures to follow in the event of a young person going missing. They talk to young people about keeping themselves safe and respond appropriately to protect them when they go missing without authority.

Young people are aware of the circumstances when they will be reported missing. The home has links with other agencies to support young people who go missing and work with them when they return to try and ensure their future safety. The number of incidents of young people going missing has significantly reduced in the last few months.

Managing behaviour positively is a priority in the home to try and ensure young people behave in a socially acceptable way. Staff's approach to caring for young people is to have clear boundaries and a well structured activity plans in place. Young people are involved in the decision making process to determine their weekly activity plan, rewards and the incentives put in place for them. Young people are responding well to this approach and have made significant progress in this area.

The sanctions and restraint records include the required information. Few sanctions have been given and no physical interventions have taken place since the last inspection. The views and comments of young people are recorded for the sanctions made. A young person said they get on with staff.

Young people's safety is promoted through the practices and support from staff. For example, risk assessments are in place, which cover the relevant areas, with good detail on how the supporting safety measures will be implemented with young people to keep them safe.

Fire records indicate that there are frequent checks on the system, the staff have received fire instruction, training and drills are in line with policy and procedures.

There are robust vetting and recruitment procedures for staff in place to ensure young people are prevented from being cared for by unsuitable staff. The recruitment files contain all the required information and all relevant checks on the person are undertaken, including the Criminal Record Bureau checks, references and a full employment history.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There is good individual support for young people from the staff and a selection of professionals when they need it to assist them to make progress in their lives. There are positive links with voluntary agencies, health and care professionals such as safe at last and Connexions.

Young people are positively encouraged to attend school or college to ensure they attain the necessary education to assist them to achieve their potential and gain skills which will support them into adulthood. This is evidenced by staffing assisting young people to identify suitable college placements and liaising with education and connexions personnel. Supporting activity packages have been put in place to positively focus young people whilst suitable college or other employment packages are found. Personal Education Plans and other relating information are not in place but the manager has requested the local authority to provide these.

The home has a good selection of books and games, and some study materials are available. A computer for the young people to access for education and leisure is being installed.

Young people are motivated, encouraged and supported well by staff to pursue individual interests and hobbies which develops their confidence and self esteem. They undertake a wide selection of leisure activities and hobbies on a weekly basis, such as cycling, rollerblading and football.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are assessed and documented within their care plans and supporting documents. These record in some detail what the individual needs of young people are and how they will be met. Staff spoke about how they provide care to individual young people which reflects their care plan. However, not all looked after children's information has been provided by the local authority to set out the needs, purpose and aim of the placement in full.

It is the usual practice for care reviews to take place and the young people are positively involved. However, no date has been set for a care review to take place, although the manager has requested it.

Important links with their family and local communities are in place for young people. They have regularly contact with family and friends which the staff actively encourage and facilitate. Young people confirmed this.

Good support and encouragement is given to young people to make decisions about their lives and the running of the home. Young people are actively involved in making decisions about the weekly activities and the menu. Staff said young people also contribute to decision made about incentives, rewards and their views sought when attending their statutory reviews.

There are positive relationships and good communication between young people and the staff. This is evident in the discussions between the young people and staff during the inspection. They discussed the success of the morning activities and the plans for the afternoon. Young people are enthusiastic and enjoying the activities provided.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are being supported, to develop some independent living skills. They are involved in undertaking practical daily living tasks, such as, processing their own laundry, keeping their own bedrooms tidy and preparing snacks and simple meals. Staff said the developing of other key areas appropriate to their age such as budgeting skills, the preparation and cooking of evening meals will be planned in the future.

A pathway plan or other specific plans for preparing young people for independence have not been undertaken by the placing authority. Therefore, this does not assist fully in building and preparing young people for independence or supporting them into adulthood.

The accommodation is decorated and furnished to a good standard, providing a positive and domestic environment for the young people to live in. The home has been refurbished throughout since the last inspection. It is clean and tidy, with good repair and maintenance programmes in place. Young people's bedrooms are well equipped with a range of furniture. They have personalised their room by purchasing posters and other items.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The required information is included in the statement of purpose to inform others of what to expect from the home and how young people are cared for. This is to enable and assist in the appropriate admissions to the home and ensure individual needs can be met.

Staff are well supported and guided in promoting young people's welfare. Staff receive formal supervision at regular intervals. There are regular staff meetings and daily handovers. Staff commented that they work well as a team and have good communication systems which assists them in providing consistent care to the young people. They spoke about their work with young people with enthusiasm and a positive attitude.

Staffing levels are good and young people receive care from competent and experienced staff to help meet their needs. The morning shift was worked by two residential care workers and the manager to care of one young person. The people in these positions have a wide range of experience to undertake their duties.

The target of 80% has not yet been achieved by the workforce being trained in the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. Although good progress is being made. The staff have access to a wide selection of training in current childcare practices to ensure they are competent to meet the needs of the young people. They have opportunities to undertake mandatory and other training in a number of areas, such as attachment and loss, leaving care, sexual health, drugs and alcohol.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evidenced through practice, supporting policies, procedures and the individual placement plans. Young people receive an individual service which is tailored to meet their personal needs. The staff have a good knowledge of the young people's needs and are working with them to ensure the right support and care is being provided.

Monthly monitoring visits take place to check how care is provided in the home. These are carried out in some detail. Further monitoring is undertaken by the manager. This contributes

to the good monitoring system to ensure the young people living at the home are well cared for and National Minimum Standards and regulations are being met.

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 meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
2	ensure before accommodating a young person in the home, that the placing authority provide a plan of care. (Regulation 12)	28 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that Personal Education Plans and other relevant education information are in place for individual young people (NMS 14)
- ensure care reviews are planned and arranged within the set time scales to monitor the progress of young people (NMS3)
- ensure pathway and leaving care plans are in place to support the young people adequately in preparing for independence and adulthood (NMS6)
- ensure that the minimum ratios of 80% of all care staff complete their NVQ level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 29)