

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Jacqui Gosling
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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 operates a service for up to five male young people. The home provides a specialist service to young people who have a range of complex needs and who can present significant risks to themselves and others. Young people have exclusive access to a registered school that is also managed by the organisation. The home is located close to several town centres with public transport facilities and local amenities close by. Currently, three young people are residing here.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this unannounced key inspection, all key standards in all outcome areas were assessed.

The home provides an excellent standard of care. Young people are fully involved in the assessment, care planning and decision making processes and feel confident about contributing their views to the running of the home. They enjoy positive relationships with staff which helps them to feel settled and to make good progress. Staff are consistent in their approach to young people and behaviour is managed at the lowest level.

Young people are cared for safely by a competent team of staff, who work well together and who are supported by clear policies and procedures, supervision and relevant training. Staff encourage young people to develop a healthy lifestyle and work hard to ensure that they are able to pursue their education and achieve to their individual potential. Staff also support young people to maintain positive relationships with their families and significant others.

Three recommendations were made at this inspection, these relates to ensuring required paperwork is provided by local authorities and signed by the person with parental responsibility.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made during the last inspection that took place in October 2009.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of young people's health is excellent. Clear health plans, based on detailed initial assessments, ensure that the health requirements of young people are known to staff. This ensures that they receive the support they need to promote their good health. Plans are developed and are monitored regularly to make sure that information is up to date and accurate. Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician when they are admitted to the home and are supported at health appointments. Staff actively encourage young people to live healthy lives and to avoid things that may be harmful to their health, such as alcohol, cigarettes and drugs. Young people are accessing regular, high quality therapeutic support that matches their identified needs.

Young people are provided with well balanced, nutritious meals. They are involved in drawing up the menus and can put forward ideas and suggestions for food they would like to eat. They have opportunities to plan and prepare some meals. Meal times are positive social occasions when staff and young people sit down together. Staff complete required training to ensure the kitchen is a safe and healthy environment. The home received a maximum five star rating from the environmental health inspector earlier this year. The dining room offers sufficient space to allow all the young people and staff to eat together.

There are robust systems for the safe storage and delivery of medication, which protect young people. Staff are appropriately trained, procedures are clear and medication is safely stored in a locked cabinet. The recording system is effective and records are regularly monitored to ensure that they are accurate.

The manager ensures all staff are trained in the delivery of first aid, so that they have a clear understanding of how to care for young people in an emergency. Appropriate 'looked after children' consent for medical intervention has been obtained. However, for some young people, their social worker instead of the person with parental responsibility has given consent for administering of first aid. This could potentially delay young people receiving prompt attention.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home has very effective policies, procedures and care practices, which ensure that young people are cared for safely. For example, robust individual risk assessments and support plans ensure that staff have appropriate strategies in place to protect the young people. Young people say that they 'feel safe' in the home. They are protected from potential abuse because staff are properly trained and have a good understanding of the home's procedures for reporting and managing safeguarding concerns.

Young people say that they do not believe that bullying is an issue in the home, but that if there is a problem, staff deal with it. To protect young people, staff encourage young people to understand the impact of bullying on individuals. This includes open discussions in individual, group work sessions and resident meetings about any difficulties there may be between them.

The privacy and confidentiality of young people is properly respected. Young people have individual bedrooms, where they can be private and where they can keep their possessions safe. Room searches are undertaken in accordance with the organisation's procedures and only when there are clear grounds for such a search. Young people are encouraged to respect each other's personal space. Records are held securely and staff have a good understanding of issues of confidentiality.

Complaints are managed very well. There is a very clear complaints procedure which is made known to young people when they come to live in the home. Young people clearly understand how to make a formal complaint and there is clear evidence that they feel confident about letting staff know if they are unhappy with any aspect of their care. In addition, a member of an independent advocacy service whose contact details are displayed around the house, visits twice a year so the young people know her. This ensures young people have access to someone outside the home who they can talk to.

There is a robust protocol for managing unauthorised absences to keep young people safe. Individual risk assessments identify the specific issues in relation to unauthorised absences which staff need to consider. Young people are actively discouraged from being away from the home without permission. If a young person goes missing staff work closely with police and other agencies to help ensure the safe return of the young person to the home.

There is a strong emphasis in the home on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour and effort. Staff develop positive relationships with young people and help them to learn to manage their own behaviour in a way that is socially acceptable. Staff are trained to manage challenging behaviour including the use of restraints. However, there have been very few incidents of physical restraint in the home since the last inspection. This indicates that staff are successful in the positive way that they work with young people.

The management of health and safety processes is excellent. This helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or injury in the home. Equipment and installations are serviced regularly and there are regular fire safety tests. Young people take part in regular evacuation drills so that they understand what to do in the event of a fire or other emergency. Risk assessments on the environment and on activities that young people may be involved in are robust and are regularly reviewed to make sure that information is up to date.

There are effective procedures for the recruitment and selection of staff. These ensure that all staff are thoroughly vetted before they start work. The identity of all visitors to the home is checked before they are allowed in. These robust systems

protect young people as they ensure that unauthorised individuals are not able to gain access to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit by having their unique needs thoroughly assessed and met. Staff members know all of the young people very well and implement individual care plans in a thorough and consistent manner. Initial assessments take into account each child's own social, economic and ethnic backgrounds. The staff are sensitive to these and appropriate external referrals are made for ongoing therapy, intervention and support.

Staff actively promote the inclusion of young people in the home's daily routines and events. Young people are supported to access and attend various community-based activities and venues according to their own choices and preferences. Staff support young people to develop their own interests and hobbies, for example fishing. The staff review and update assessments so they are informed about what they can do to reduce potential risks to young people.

Staff are very positive about the value of education. Daily attendance at school is an expected part of the life of the home and staff work hard to help young people achieve this. A number of staff have completed learning assistant training and they provide practical and emotional support to help young people to maintain their attendance. Staff attend meetings at schools and provide good facilities in the home. These facilities include computers, internet access, books and a place to study to support the young people. All achievements are recognised and celebrated, to encourage young people to persevere with their education. The school and home are proactive in requesting local authorities provide required paperwork, but some young people do not have up to date personal education plans (PEP's).

Regular house meetings and key worker sessions are used to review current activities and explore new ones. The home has good transport provisions which meets the needs of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The young people are enabled by the good practice of staff to contribute effectively to their care. Each young person has a clearly written placement plan that identifies their needs and any potential risks. The care plan is updated and a report is written and forwarded to the young person's social worker regularly. Six weekly focus group meetings are also held to assess young people's progress and development. The young people attend their reviews and have an opportunity to make their wishes and feelings known. There are clear contact details recorded and young people are provided with practical support to ensure that where possible, contact with family is

maintained.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people concerned, and take into account the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents. Admissions to the home are planned and the young person, and their family where appropriate are involved in that planning. Therefore, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

However, some local authority social workers are not providing up to date and complete 'looked after children' documentation, which is signed by the person with parental responsibility as required. But staff are proactive in continuing to request that this paperwork is provided.

Young people's views are valued and opportunities for them to have their say are available through key working sessions, group sessions, resident meetings and day-to-day informal discussions. The young people's reviews meetings give them an opportunity to have their views listened to and also an opportunity to say what they have achieved.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children live in a safe and appropriately maintained environment where communal areas are decorated and furnished to a satisfactory standard. Rooms are homely and comfortable and provide good communal space for the young people. Bedrooms are of a good size and are personalised to varying standards by their occupants. Toilet and bathing facilities are of a good standard and afford good privacy. The home's grounds are spacious and appropriately maintained offering sufficient levels of communal space for the young people to have choices regarding their recreational and leisure time.

Young people say they like their bedrooms and spoke of how they choose posters to decorate them. They are satisfied with the standard of accommodation, have comfortable beds to sleep in and like living in the home. Standards of cleanliness and hygiene are high throughout the home and no safety hazards are evident.

Young people receive pocket money on a sliding age scale and clear records of all transactions are kept by staff. They also receive a clothing allowance and have access to personal requisites such as toiletries. Young people are well presented in clothes appropriate to their age and of their choosing.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose and children's guide. The young people receive a children's guide when they are accommodated at the home. This gives them clear information on the expectations of the home.

Staff receive a thorough induction into the home, which promotes safe practice. Staff are offered a range of training to give them the skills and knowledge to meet young people's needs. Staff have completed National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Young People or are working towards it.

The home is appropriately staffed in line with the Statement of Purpose. Staff on duty are supported by senior staff and a manager is always on call to offer support and give guidance. The staff are supported in their practice through regular supervision and staff meetings where they can reflect on practice issues. The staff team are an established and experienced group who work in a professional, committed and competent manner, enabling the home to meet its aims and objectives.

There is an effective quality assurance system in place to promote the raising of standards. This includes monitoring visits and an internal monitoring system completed by the manager. Regulation 33 monthly visits occur and reports on the visits are forwarded to the home and to Ofsted as required.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff are a diverse care team. They are knowledgeable and able to meet the diverse needs of the young people accommodated. Staff are supportive of the home's management and ethos. Staff are clear that the provision has full regard for equality and diversity issues and that no discriminatory attitudes or practices exist within the service.

Documentation relating to young people is detailed and recording is of a good standard. Files provide a secure record of young people's needs, development, progress and history. Records are kept up to date and stored securely and young people are encouraged to contribute to their files. Information in young people's files is cross referenced with other records kept in the home, so that every young person has a clear history of their time in care and in this placement, to which they can have access.

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):

- obtain and retain on file prior written permission from the person with parental responsibility for the administration of first aid (NMS 13.4)
- ensure all young people's files contain a copy of their personal education plan, specifically, continue to request local authority's to provide this required paperwork (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that the young people's looked after child documentation from their placing authority is complete, specifically, it is signed by the person with parental responsibility. (NMS 2.1)