

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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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 is a children's home located in a diverse area of a city. The home provides accommodation for four young people aged from 11 years to 17 years. The home comprises two independent flats for young people's use and an adjoining unit for two young people living together and supported by staff.

Three young people currently live in this home and all were present during the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced full inspection all key standards were inspected. National minimum standard six in the outcome area of achieving economic well-being was not inspected on this visit. This is a good service, which provides two models of care within one property. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the good relationships that exist between staff and young people and between young people and their peers.

Management and leadership of the home are strong and this is complemented by a consistent and competent staff team. There are few incidents of young people going missing without permission and little use of sanctions and physical restraint. Young people respond well to the reward system in place. This inspection has identified three recommendations with regards to the records kept by the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection the Registered Manager was asked to ensure young people have their views recorded and sign their names against the sanction records kept by the home. Some progress has been made in this area, however, this progress is not being consistently followed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Meals provide young people with variety and achieve a good balance between the use of convenience foods and fresh ingredients. Staff encourage any young people with poor eating habits to try different meals. Young people have the opportunity to shop, plan and help staff prepare and cook their own meals. Their participation in

shopping, preparing and cooking meals helps equip them for adulthood. Fruit, drinks and snacks are available for young people to help themselves to throughout the day.

A detailed health history, compiled for individual young people, advises staff of any health issues and informs the planning of services. All young people are registered with local medical practitioners. They are supported to maintain good health by having routine checks with the dentist, optician and doctor. Where needed, specialist services are sourced to promote young people's emotional and physical health, such as, drug or alcohol misuse. The home also seeks to educate young people about maintaining a healthy lifestyle and precautions they can take to keep themselves safe.

Current practice with regard to storage of medication in the home is consistent with the home's medication policy. Arrangements for the storage and administration of prescribed medication are appropriate. It is administered in accordance with the pharmacist's instructions and only to the young people for whom it is prescribed. Staff are trained in the use of first aid and they receive training to enable them to administer medication safely.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and staff do not enter their bedrooms without being invited. Young people have keys to their bedrooms; this gives them free access, control over who enters and the ability to keep their possessions safe. Confidential information on young people and staff is locked in the office. Young people and unauthorised people are not allowed access to the office and staff are careful with the way information is managed. Young people are informed of their rights and know they can read information recorded about them.

Young people are well informed about the complaints procedure that operates in the home and within their placing authority. Staff are proactive in dealing with concerns raised by young people, and this keeps the number of formal complaints to a minimum. Young people are satisfied that concerns are taken seriously and one recorded complaint following the previous inspection shows young people are satisfied with the outcome.

There are no issues to do with safeguarding. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of how to refer any suspicion of abuse or disclosure to the relevant authorities charged with protecting young people. Staff are trained and familiar with their roles and duties to safeguard. Bullying is not an issue within this home, and young people are provided with good advice and support which reduces the potential for bullying to occur.

Young people rarely go missing from the home but when they do, staff implement the home's missing person protocol and attempt to locate them and persuade them to return. A risk assessment approach is used to determine the length of time for

which it is safe for individual young people to be absent before reporting them as missing to the police. All necessary action is taken to ensure the safe return of young people, with social workers and family being kept informed of developments. On return young people are welcomed back to the home and consideration given as to whether the home remains a safe place for them to live. All staff demonstrate well their duty to report significant events to appropriate authorities, which further protects young people.

Behaviour is well managed and incidents of physical intervention and sanctions are consistently low. Rewards feature far more than sanctions. However, of the few sanctions imposed, young people have not entered their views or signed their names in the records kept by the home. This issue was raised at the previous inspection. Staff are trained how to hold young people safely should physical restraint be necessary.

A safe environment is provided for young people and staff. Staff receive training in health and safety and complete more comprehensive training in matters such as fire and food safety. Weekly checks on the fire alarm system and regular maintenance of fire prevention equipment and portable electrical appliances are carried out. Young people take part in fire drills so that they know what to do in the event of a fire. Any identified environmental issues and activities in which young people participate are risk assessed and appropriate safeguards identified. However, some recorded risk assessments need to be reviewed and updated.

Recruitment checks for permanent staff conform to regulations and determine whether people are suitable to work with young people. Staff files are in good order and contain all the information required.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff support is consistently available to young people. Staffing ratios enable staff to spend time with young people. Staff are always available to support young people in a crisis. A key worker system provides young people with a named member of staff who will hold more responsibility for caring for them than others. Young people can have dedicated time with their key worker each week, to discuss and plan personal issues. Sessions of the direct work undertaken are adequately recorded to show the extent to which young people are supported in accordance with their plans. External support, such as counselling and advocacy, is acquired for young people for whom it is an identified need.

Staff work with young people to enable them to make positive choices. They support young people with their education or training needs to help them learn and achieve.

Leisure and recreational opportunities are promoted by staff. Young people choose to participate in some activities, but more often than not choose to spend their leisure time with friends in the local area. Staff are proactive in encouraging individual and

group activities and say the current resident group are not engaging or taking an interest in activities suggested by them or to them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home assesses the needs of young people prior to admission, where appropriate, and strategies for addressing these needs are broadly outlined within the home's own placement tracker plan. Placement tracker plans are subject to regular review and are mostly updated at least monthly to make sure they remain current. However, some placement tracker plans are not completed comprehensively. Details are not entered in all of the Every Child Matters outcomes. In the absence of more detailed information there is no clear instruction, to enable staff to meet young people's needs comprehensively.

The care that young people receive is subject to regular review by their placing authority. Reviews take place at the required frequency as a minimum. Reviews take place more frequently when there is an identified need, such as planning for transition. Staff consult and prepare young people for what is likely to be discussed during their review. This gives them the confidence to attend and participate. Young people are also consulted by people independent of the home and have an opportunity to complete questionnaires about the care they receive in the home.

Young people's contact is recorded in detail and clearly outlines agreed contact arrangements and if contact needs to be supervised. Staff work hard to give both practical and emotional support to young people to help them maintain contact with their families and friends.

Planned admissions to the home are considered for suitability through a thorough referral process. Consideration is taken on any likely impact they may have on the existing resident group, and equally the impact the resident group may have on a new admission. Where emergency admissions take place, occasionally some information is lacking and telephone enquiries are made by staff and planning meetings are requested for such detail. Discharges are well planned with suitable provision arranged through appropriate services.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is located in a diverse area of a city centre and takes into account the individual needs of young people. The home sets out to provide different types of accommodation. On one side of the house is a traditional type residential unit offering a family group type of placement and this has two bedrooms. Whilst the other side of the house is made up of three self-contained flats fully equipped for independent living. Two of the self-contained flats are for young people's use. These two models of care work well and do not impact on each other and are both staffed

according to young people's specific needs. Young people are currently undertaking daily basic independent living skills, although no formal independence programme has commenced.

The accommodation is decorated and furnished to a reasonable standard. This includes having an ongoing improvement programme to enhance facilities further. Toilet and washing facilities provide privacy and are sufficient to meet the needs of young people and staff.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Information describing the services and facilities provided by the home are published in two different formats. Information in the Statement of Purpose is available within the home and on request. A children's guide is given to young people to inform them how they can expect to be cared for at the home. This is attractively presented and easy to read. The manager is aware that the Statement of Purpose document is in need of amending in line with the organisation's policy.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good with young people receiving individualised care to meet their needs. Young people are respected and valued for who they are. They are encouraged to develop an awareness of their rights and responsibilities and they receive fair treatment within the home. Support provided to them takes account of their needs as individuals. Staff provide information to young people in a way that considers their needs and promotes their inclusion.

Staff are well supported by the manager and by each other. Staff meetings take place monthly and staff receive regular supervision on both a formal and informal basis. These forums provide staff with the opportunities to discuss practice issues and reflect on their own practice. The home is staffed at all times by staff with sufficient experience and qualifications and who are confident in their role. Staff are all trained to carry out their responsibilities with refresher training being provided to keep them up to date with changing legislation.

A robust system is in place for monitoring the practice of the home and ensuring that the welfare of young people is safeguarded. The manager conducts a monthly audit of records to make sure that staff are fulfilling their role correctly. The external line manager also visits the home at least monthly to conduct a quality assurance audit. The audit includes talking to young people, their families and staff to obtain their opinions of the care provided at the home. Reports are completed of both matters and these identify any issues that require attention.

Case files are kept for young people in which their progress is recorded. Files mainly contain all the background detail required which enables the home to plan an effective care package. The monitoring process is good at identifying when placing authorities fail to forward essential information to the home, such as, looked after children documentation.

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 when disciplinary measures are used, young people are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them if possible in the records kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
- ensure risk assessments are carried out, recorded in writing and regularly reviewed (NMS 26.2)
- ensure the placement plan is consistent with any plan for the care of the child prepared by the placing authority. (NMS 2.1)