

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Lucy Ansell
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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 specialist home dealing with children who have been severely traumatised or psychologically deprived, with disordered patterns of attachment. This home is part of a children's charity and along with its school provides a programme of care, therapeutic work and education for up to 10 children, aged between five and 13 years of age.

The home is located in a rural setting. It is a detached Edwardian house with accommodation arranged on three floors, providing a warm, child-friendly environment. There is a rear garden with a play area, a vegetable garden and a tarmac area for cycling/rollerblading.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an unannounced social care inspection of all the key standards. This is judged as an outstanding service. Children's welfare is enhanced by the excellent relationships with staff and by the therapeutic approach used. Young people are encouraged to follow healthy lifestyles and are given lots of opportunities to access physical and leisure activities. The strengths of the service are the commitment by staff to allow each individual child to thrive in terms of personal development and growth of self esteem. The Registered Manager is focused to support staff to improve practice through training and by supporting their therapeutic practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

Three recommendations were made at the last inspection, two of which were to help strengthen monitoring and cross references. These have both been addressed and the new systems are ensuring continued safeguarding of the children. The third was to ensure senior management are offered advanced child protection training. The manager and the director have both completed this training and it is hoped to be cascaded down to the team leaders.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children positively benefit by having their health needs thoroughly assessed and met. All care files hold a health section, which details medical histories, appointments attended and medical consent for treatment. Health plans are able to give a clear

description of children's individual health needs, and this information is effectively shared throughout the staff team. This has a positive impact for all of the children in the home and means their health needs are being met consistently. Specialist input is also provided to meet specific needs. All staff work in a therapeutic way and the home employs two psychotherapists to promote their emotional well-being. The home provides a rolling programme of health and medication training; the senior staff are up-to-date with regards first aid training and medication administration. Medication, including prescribed and over the counter remedies, is being securely stored and appropriately administered.

The home's cook has the skills and experience to deliver an excellent service supported by homes staff when she is not on shift. Menus are planned in advance and consultation mechanisms with the children are in place. Effective systems ensure she is aware of preferences, dislikes and allergies. Mealtimes are sociable occasions, whereby staff engage appropriately with the children, whilst setting clear boundaries with regards table manners. The dining room is spacious and able to accommodate all of the children and staff on duty. Activities which promote a healthy active lifestyle are positively encouraged and well resourced. All of the children enjoy regular physical activities of their own interest and choosing.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Sound procedural guidance is implemented in practice and this ensures children's privacy is respected. Written information is securely held and shared appropriately with external agencies.

The homes complaints literature is readily available to the children and is regularly discussed in the community meetings. The children know how to raise issues and concerns within the home and also by using the external independent agents who visit. Records of the daily community meetings show children fully involved in this informal forum. This is actively encouraged and forms a major part of the home's therapeutic work, in promoting self advocacy and always considering the child's point of view. Those children present during this visit happily spent time with the inspector talking very knowledgeably about how they are kept safe.

Staff effectively protect the children from harm through the sound application of clear child protection procedures. Staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities and receive updated child protection training annually. The senior management have recently undertaken advanced child protection training.

Children readily confirm that there are no issues of bullying within the home and say the staff are quick to deal with arguments. High staff supervision and the young people being able to talk freely on any issues that are worrying them in an open forum; this reduces the potential for bullying dramatically.

There have been no instances of absences without authority; however the staff are

clear about the procedure to follow should this occur. All outings are risk assessed, the premises have excellent security and high staffing levels provide excellent supervision. Clear systems remain in place with regard to making notifications to external agencies.

Children are helped to develop good behaviours by rewarding positive behaviour and by using staff members as excellent role models. The children understand that they are likely to miss out on an outing or a treat and this works effectively given their age. Written records on the use of sanctions and physical restraints contain clear and comprehensive details and every team member has attended accredited external physical intervention training. However written detail of the effectiveness of the management of behaviour is not explicit within the log books. There is clear specific behaviour management guidance for each individual child. All records pertaining to behaviour management are scrutinised and monitored by the Registered Manager on a monthly basis.

Children live in a home that provides physical safety and security. All furnishings and fittings remain in excellent condition and systems for repairs and ongoing maintenance work ensure this standard is being maintained. Fire equipment is subject to routine servicing and maintenance by an external company. The fire risk assessment is up-to-date and the children understand evacuation procedures, which are regularly practised in accordance with the standards. Good security to the sides of the property safely restricts children's access to the front, which provides adequate space for car parking. A one-way system of entry and exit, with clear signage of speed limits further promotes excellent safety measures. The homes vehicles are subject to appropriate insurance cover and daily checks to ensure they are not used unless fit to do so.

Water temperature checks continue to be routinely checked, as are fridge/freezers, and the home possesses adequate insurance cover.

Children's safety is of paramount importance in terms of the home's recruitment practices. References are obtained and verified, alongside enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures before candidates are able to take up their posts. However references were not checked with a follow up phone call with the last two staff employed due to staff illness. The system on the personnel files which would record all checks and references is not robust enough. CRB's are updated on a three year cycle. There is good monitoring of any visitors to the home to ensure there is no unsupervised access to the children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Children positively benefit by having their own needs thoroughly assessed and met. Staff members know all of the children 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 the child's personal histories, and ongoing intervention and support from the child

therapists ensure their emotional health is well supported. Therapeutic work, particularly around children's life stories and making sense of their past is exemplary. The home works hard on preparing children for moving on to fostering or adoption placements, or for the next placement in a planned way as possible.

The education of the young people is actively promoted and appropriate school work is being completed and progress made. The young people mainly attend the home's school or specialist senior schools. The home works hard to ensure good communications between the two disciplines.

Children thrive in terms of personal development and growth because the home provides a multitude of extra curricular and leisure activities. The home is very well equipped in terms of books, games and play equipment and its large garden provides plenty of space and appropriate outdoor toys. Regular activities include swimming, skiing, guitar playing, mini rugby, and street dance. Children are provided with the uniforms and equipment to attend these. Children spoken to were very positive about their holiday in the New Forest, the up coming trip to Lapland UK for a Christmas treat, and the individual summer holiday treats they received from a benefactor. Daily community meetings and key worker sessions are used to review current activities and explore new ones. The home has excellent transport provision which meets the needs of the children; it ensures they are able to go out individually, as well as in groups.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Placements are offered based upon sound and thorough assessment processes. This approach results in children being placed in a home in a planned and sensitive manner, into an environment which is able to effectively meet their needs. Placement plans of care are comprehensive and clear. Statutory and in care reviews are up-to-date. Children are effectively supported to attend and participate in these. Records pertaining to development, progress and areas of concern are all in good order.

Wherever possible and appropriate, the home strives to forge positive relationships with birth parents. Children benefit from this approach and are able to maintain positive contact with those who are significant and important to them. A particular strength of the service is the way in which it supports children to leave the home.

Children develop well because they enjoy sound and trusting relationships with their caregivers. They are provided with appropriate forums to share their views and speak very positively about these.

Staff are observed to interact positively and appropriately with all of the children. They know them very well and can encourage much fun and laughter, whilst setting appropriate limits and boundaries in line with good parenting.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

This is a large detached Edwardian house set back from the road in spacious grounds, in a rural location. The nearest villages are some miles away. Accommodation is arranged over the first two floors with the offices and meeting rooms on the very top floor. There are 10 children's bedrooms individually personalised with staff sleep-in rooms nearby, one on each floor. All the children's doors are alarmed at night for increased security. The smallest lounge is on the middle floor which is used by the older children, then a bigger lounge is available on the ground floor. A large playroom and sitting room provide further communal space or it can be used for additional privacy or meetings. The dining room has table large enough to seat all children and staff. There are adequate bathrooms and showers on both floors which have recently been remodelled, and there are sufficient toilets for all staff and young people.

The rear garden is spacious and secure, with an area dedicated to growing plants and vegetables which the children really enjoy. Appropriate outside play equipment, trampoline and climbing frame is in excellent order and records support all relevant health and safety checks are being conducted. There is also a hard play area, and a big garden shed for all the bikes, rollerblades and outside play equipment.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Written literature, including the Statement of Purpose accurately describes the services offered and is subject to ongoing review. Literature for the children is designed in an age appropriate format and is routinely explored with the children to ensure their continued understanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Children are highly valued in terms of their own uniqueness, and the home ensures their presenting needs are carefully assessed and met to promote positive outcomes. Children are positively encouraged to value themselves and others.

Every member of the staff team is explicitly aware of their duty to safeguard the children and promote their overall well-being. Induction processes for staff are thorough; this process serves to protect both staff and children. Every staff member has a clear and explicit job description. Lines of responsibility and accountability are clear and effective. Appropriate deputising arrangements are in place. This is a well managed home with an experienced staff team and excellent management and leadership. Staff feel well supported and say that teamwork and staff meetings are seen as important and happen regularly. Staff receive formal, structured supervision and appraisals on a regular basis alongside therapeutic training on a weekly basis. The Registered Manager receives supervision from an external source. Staff have received all relevant annual and specialist training which is a recognised

accredited training in therapeutic childcare equivalent to a National Vocational Qualification at level 3. The home is well staffed with three teams that can provide a balance of relevant experience and competence at all times. There is a good gender mix of staff.

Sound mechanisms implemented by the responsible individual and Registered Manager ensure the home is being effectively monitored. Regulation 33 reports are used to inform and improve upon all areas of practice.

Case records contain all of the required information and are securely held. Children know they can look at their files if they wish.

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 the effectiveness and any consequence of a restraint or sanction is clearly recorded (NMS 22)
- ensure there is a comprehensive written record of the recruitment process. (NMS 27)