

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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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

The home cares for children and young people from the ages of birth to 17 years. The home is divided into two houses close by one another.

The first is a large Victorian detached house set in substantial grounds and provides accommodation over two floors. The house is split into three groups and includes a mother and baby unit. The house has plenty of space for young people to access including shared and private space.

The second property is a modern detached property, and also provides accommodation over two floors. Both houses are situated in a residential area within a village, close to leisure facilities, local amenities and transport links.

Summary

At this full unannounced inspection, the key standards were inspected. The focus of the inspection was to find out how well the home meets the needs of young people living there.

This children's home is a good service, which is outstanding in the way they support young people to attend education and enjoy their leisure time. The home provides a safe, caring and stimulating environment for young people with a wide range of needs, including young mums and their babies, complex learning disabilities and communication needs and young people with emotional difficulties. The home is very good at identifying young people's individual needs in comprehensive placement plans and ensuring that they receive a personalised service that meets their specific needs. There is clear evidence of young people making progress and achieving good outcomes in many aspects of their lives, including their personal care, life skills, difficult behaviours and communication skills. The house is well equipped and furnished to meet the needs of those living there.

Young people are looked after effectively by enthusiastic and competent people with the skills and knowledge to care for those with a variety of needs. Staff have a detailed understanding of young people's needs and the support they require. The staff team shows a strong commitment to providing a high quality service for vulnerable young people.

However, some shortfalls were identified. There are some issues around the documentation in relation to menus, behaviour management and the admissions and discharge register has been mislaid within the home. Also the frequency of supervision does not consistently meet the minimum standard. Finally, staff photographs are not consistently held on their file within the home, there are also some general maintenance issues and Ofsted's details have been omitted from the young person's guide of the home.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the Registered Manager was asked to ensure that regular testing of the emergency lighting system was maintained. This has been undertaken.

They were also asked to ensure that the interior of the home is maintained and that the garden is well maintained and safe. Since that last inspection, parts of both buildings have been redecorated and the garden of the smaller house has been levelled and several very large trees have been removed. They also have some outdoor seating and a couple of swings installed for children to play on.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals, reflecting a range of different cultural tastes that meet their dietary needs. However, a record of all meals served is not always consistently maintained.

Staff clearly understand what makes a healthy and balanced diet and encourage young people to develop healthy eating habits. Young people are encouraged to choose what they have to eat and go shopping for food regularly. Young mums are offered support and guidance on ways of feeding their babies, including best practice and budgeting.

Young people's health needs are actively promoted. They are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. They have detailed plans, set out in an accessible and meaningful way, identifying their assessed health needs and how they are being met. Staff monitor young people to make sure they are healthy by encouraging them to attend routine health checks and by ensuring they get medical treatment when they are unwell. The home has good links with health and advisory services to make sure that young people get suitable support with specific health issues, such as nursing mums, learning disabilities and mental health. Staff deal with health issues sensitively. They make sure young people get appropriate support and advice, including developing their personal care skills, to promote healthy lifestyles.

Staff with first aid qualifications are on duty at all times to make sure appropriate action is taken to safeguard young people in the case of an emergency. Young people's health needs are also protected by robust medication policies and practice guidance. Staff have a clear understanding of the medication procedures and are trained to manage medicines safely.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and dignity are promoted. There are comprehensive policies and procedures in place that promote privacy and confidentiality well. Young people have single bedrooms and the accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time alone when they wish.

Young mums are encouraged to have their babies with them in Moses baskets through the night. This is in line with best practice and support is given if necessary to young people throughout the night. Staff respect young people's privacy, consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. They are sensitive to gender issues especially when dealing with young people of the opposite sex. Staff assist young people with their personal care in ways that promote their independence, privacy and dignity.

The home has a clear and accessible complaints procedure in place, which is available to young people, parents and the placing authorities. Young people also have regular monthly visits from

an independent person from the organisation. This means young people have good opportunities to make their feelings and wishes known.

Young people do not currently experience bullying. The home has detailed and effective risk assessments, procedures and practices for countering any potential bullying.

Young people's welfare is promoted and safeguarded. They are protected by sound policies and guidance relating to child protection concerns. Staff fully understand about their roles and responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. They are familiar with the home's safeguarding policies. Staff provide a good level of supervision for young people based on their age, gender, disability and level of understanding, to make sure young people are safe in the home and in the community.

Young people's care plans are effectively put into practice by staff to ensure that young people do not go missing. Their behaviour is supported by comprehensive individual behaviour management plans. These provide staff with a clear understanding of young people's individual behaviour and how best to respond to particular behaviour and situations. The plans are detailed and specific to young people's individual needs. In addition, staff regularly review plans to take into account changes and ensure that they continue to support young people effectively.

Staff view young people in a positive light and make every effort to understand young people's behaviour. They ensure young people have clear and consistent boundaries to help them understand what is expected of them and what is unacceptable. Staff use effective communication skills to build positive relationships with young people and encourage them to develop socially acceptable behaviour. This includes giving young people opportunities to experience different social experiences, such as going swimming, shopping and using public transport, to develop an understanding of acceptable behaviour in different settings.

Staff have received good training about behaviour management including restraint. They have opportunities in supervision and team meetings, to review their practice and reflect on the effectiveness of young people's behaviour plans.

Sanctions and restraints are not common place within this service. They are appropriate and consistent with the home's procedures and individual behaviour plans. However, when they have occurred they are not consistently recorded to the expected standard.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, in line with the regulations to ensure the premises are safe and secure.

The recruitment and selection of people wishing to work at the home are thorough, which helps ensure young people are protected. All staff working at the home have had an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check and there are good systems in place for supervising visitors to ensure young people are kept safe. However, children's homes legislation requires staff records to hold a recent photograph of staff. This was not consistently evident on inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff support and positively encourage young people to take part in wide range of leisure activities. They have multiple opportunities to develop confidence in their skills, enjoy their leisure time and try new things. Staff are very good at encouraging young people to take part in activities and try new experiences. Young people describe the activities and support from staff as the 'best thing' about this home.

Education is actively promoted and plays an extremely important part in the lives of young people. Their educational needs are identified in written plans and there are very clear arrangements for meeting their needs. Staff see education as very important, supporting and encouraging young people to learn and study. Young people have access to books and educational materials to aid their learning.

Young people enjoy learning and are making outstanding progress. The home is very good at working with schools, colleges and various educational facilitators to support young people's learning and address problems affecting their education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's records provide a good insight into the individual needs of young people. Placement plans are comprehensive and identify young people's needs and the arrangements for meeting them. Staff put the plans into practice and keep thorough records about young people's progress and experiences. The regular review of the plans ensures that they are up to date and continue to meet young people's needs. However, information required from placing authorities is not always contained within young people's files.

Young people have clear arrangements for contact with their families to help them maintain relationships. Staff actively ensure young people have suitable regular contact and that the arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare. They work closely with young people's families to let them know about their progress and involve them in decisions about the care provided.

Staff are good at helping young people settle in, making sure they know what is expected of them, what to do if they are worried, and know their way around the local area. The home is good at gathering sufficient information about young people before they move in to ensure that the home is able to meet their needs. The home is required to keep a register of all admissions and discharges from the home. At the time of this inspection this register was unable to be located and was thought to be mislaid within the home's office.

Staff encourage young people to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They are involved in decisions about what food they eat and what they do in their spare time.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to develop their skills and become more independent suitable to their age and understanding. The staff work hard to support young people so they have the opportunity to learn new skills through taking part in activities, such as shopping, using public transport, using money and undertaking simple household tasks.

Young people live in a location that is in easy reach of schools, leisure facilities, public transport and shops. This means young people have the opportunity to participate in and be part of the wider community. The size, layout and design of the accommodation generally meets young people's needs well. They enjoy homely and comfortable accommodation as the home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. However, a tour of both buildings revealed that the kitchen and garden in the smaller house are not as well maintained. The kitchen shows signs of wear and tear. The garden does not fully meet the specific needs of the young people placed. For example, insufficient fixed play equipment is available to enhance this specific group of young people's enjoyment of the garden.

There is a good level of personalisation in young people's bedrooms and throughout the houses with certificates of achievement proudly displayed.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is good. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to delivering equality and diversity in practice. The home provides care and accommodation for young people with a range of complex behavioural, emotional, learning and social needs from different backgrounds. Staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the young people they are working with, ensuring their needs are consistently met. The home values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity.

The home's Statement of Purpose is kept under review and at present continues to be relevant. It sets out what care the home provides and how this will be accomplished. The children's guide is well presented and the format takes into account the different ages and abilities of young people. However, upon its last review Ofsted's details have been omitted.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team with a good range of skills and experience that match the needs of young people. Staff have opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through a good training programme that covers a range of issues. All staff are clear about their role and responsibilities. Their performance has been appraised and personal development plans are in place that identify their training needs. However, professional supervision of staff has recently lapsed.

The number of staff on duty meets the needs of young people well. This includes the support they need for activities in the community. The staff team is a mixture of male and females and reflects the backgrounds of young people well. The staff have clear and comprehensive guidance about how to work safely with young people.

Monthly monitoring visits are undertaken and reports contribute to the manager's evaluation of the service. Good systems are in place to measure the home's performance and monitor its progress in delivering the service.

Young people have accessible care records that are clear and reflect the standard of care and support delivered to each young person. Systems within the home ensure that records are well maintained and are monitored and reviewed.

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
27	ensure that there are recent photographs of staff within their records (Reg 26, Sch 2)	30 September 2010
2	ensure that there is an up to date placement plan for each child or young person accommodated at the home (Regulation 12(1)(a) and (b) and Regulation 12(2))	30 September 2010
5	ensure that a record in the form of a register is maintained within the home of all admissions and discharges of young people to and from the home. (Reg 29 (1) Sch 4.1a)	30 September 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a record of menus served is maintained (NMS 10.4)
- maintain an accurate and clear record of all sanctions and physical interventions imposed on young people (NMS 22.9, 22.10)
- ensure that the interior of the home is maintained and that the garden is safe with play areas (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that the children's guide accurately describes what the home sets out to do for the children, the manner in which care is provided, how children can secure access to an independent advocate, for example, Ofsted, and about how to make a complaint (NMS 1.3)
- ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month. (NMS 28.2)