

Inspection report for children's home

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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 is a children's home for six young people of either gender from 10 years to 17 years. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and drug or alcohol dependence, from many parts of England and Wales.

It is a large detached house, four miles from the city centre. The location of the house enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, a railway station, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres and parks.

The home currently looks after five young people and three of them contributed to the inspection.

Summary

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

This is a good children's home with outstanding features in enjoying and achieving. The home meets regulations and national minimum standards consistently well. It provides a friendly, safe and stable environment that enables young people to make significant progress in all aspects of their lives, especially relating to their education, managing their frustrations, and life skills.

Young people enjoy living there and confirm that they are well looked after and get the help they need. They are looked after by a competent and settled staff team. This has enabled young people to build positive relationships with adults based on trust and respect, and have consistent adult role models. The staff's thorough understanding of young people as individuals and the quality of support and guidance assists young people to deal with the challenges they face positively and feel part of the community.

The areas for improvement relate to the standard of the accommodation. Also, young people's records, such as placement plans, are not fully completed to a high standard and not up-to-date. The home's quality assurance systems are not effective at making the necessary improvements to the records. Young people's views about sanctions are not recorded, which would help staff assess the effectiveness of the measures they use. Also, the provider does not routinely find out young people's feelings when monitoring the running of the home. This would help to assess how well young people's needs are being met.

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 manager was asked to ensure that the records provided a clear picture of each restraint and the outcome of the incident, and test the fire safety systems and fire fighting equipment regularly. Both these improvements have been made and now meet the national minimum standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs from a variety of cultures. Young people said: 'we eat loads of vegetables'. Their food choices are always taken into account and they really enjoy homemade chicken curry. They confirm that they routinely plan meals and go with staff to buy food. Also, they help to cook, for example, chopping vegetables for chicken curry. Staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They actively encourage young people to develop healthy eating habits through eating meals at regular times and eating healthier snacks.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being is actively promoted. They have easy access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Their general and specific health needs are clearly identified and met. Staff closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, by encouraging them to attend routine health checks. For example, staff work really hard with young people to ensure they go to the dentist regularly. Staff also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are unwell. This includes offering young people reassurance when they need hospital treatment, ensuring young people know, and are happy with, what is going to happen. In addition, the home has good links with a range of specialist health and advisory services to make sure that young people get suitable support with individual health issues.

Staff always encourage young people to take an active interest in looking after their own health and leading healthy lives. They encourage young people to have healthy diets and to take plenty of physical exercise. Staff place a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles. Young people access information about a wide range of health and social issues, including sexual health, smoking, alcohol, drugs, diet and emotional well-being. Young people get excellent information and advice to enable them to make informed choices about their health. As a result young people's health and well-being is improving.

The home's procedures for managing medication are put into practice effectively to ensure young people's welfare is promoted and protected. Medication is securely stored and records of any medication taken by young people are up-to-date and accurately kept. Staff make sure that young people only have medication specifically prescribed for them and take it in line with the prescription instructions. The home has strong quality assurance systems in place to ensure the procedures are put into practice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality are respected. Young people have single bedrooms and the bathroom arrangements promote privacy and dignity. The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time to be alone when they wish. Young people make and receive telephone calls in private. Information about young people is managed confidentially and held securely in the office. Staff respect young people's privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people.

Young people know how to complain and are clear that their concerns will be taken seriously and promptly and fairly addressed. They have access to information about the complaints

procedure and staff encourage young people to let them know when they have concerns or if they are unhappy.

Staff give protecting young people from harm a high priority. They have received suitable training, understand fully their roles and responsibilities to safeguard young people's welfare, and know how to respond to concerns about young people's safety. They work well with safeguarding agencies to protect young people by reporting concerns promptly and by liaising with the agencies to develop detailed safeguarding plans and practice. This involves, for example, providing young people with excellent advice about personal safety.

Staff provide a good level of support and supervision to ensure young people are not subject to bullying. They have created a friendly atmosphere where young people generally get on well. They encourage young people to talk about any problems and work to sort them out. Staff have effectively dealt with problems with bullying when it has happened; making it clear that it is not acceptable, giving young people good advice and support to deal with the situation appropriately.

Staff are effective at ensuring young people do not go missing and come in on time. The home has detailed individual risk assessments and plans for what they should do if young people go missing. The plans clearly set out what action is taken, including staff trying to contact young people by telephone, going out to look for them, collecting them when they are found, who should be notified and the timescales for letting them know. Young people do not go missing, but when they have in the past the plans have been put into practice consistently well.

Staff support young people to act in socially acceptable ways. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and the possible consequences of any poor behaviour. Staff view young people in a positive light and encourage acceptable behaviour by talking to them, trying to understand their behaviour and building positive relationships with them. Staff show a good understanding of the issues that may influence young people's behaviour, such as low self-esteem, and take steps to help young people feel positive about themselves. This approach is effective and has led to significant improvements in young people's behaviour. Also, the support and understanding young people receive have enabled them to deal with difficult situations in a mature and responsible way.

The home places a great emphasis on encouraging positive behaviour through praise and rewards. The use sanctions and restraint is usually kept to a minimum and always suitable. However, young people do not add their comments to records about any sanction or restraint they are involved in. As a result the records fail to show the impact of the measures used on individual young people.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed 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 is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. All staff have had an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check before they started to work at the home. Also, the home has strong systems in place for vetting and supervising visitors to ensure young people are safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are very well-supported and are making good progress in all aspects of their lives. They are able to talk to staff about problems and receive exceptional individual support when they need it. Staff work creatively with young people by encouraging them to express themselves through poetry and rap. Young people confirm that staff spend a lot of time individually with them and are positive about the care they receive.

Young people's individual needs are clearly identified and effectively met. There are many excellent examples of staff providing advice and support with a wide range of young people's possible needs, including identity, education, healthy lifestyles, relationships, emotional well-being, dealing with problems and life skills.

The home makes every effort to find additional support to help meet young people's specific needs. Staff have established very effective partnerships with a wide range of external helping agencies, such as counselling and health services, that provides individual young people with specialist support with particular issues. Young people also have access to information about community services they are able to contact themselves for advice.

Education is actively promoted and plays an important part in the lives of young people. Staff see education as important and have created an environment that encourages young people to learn and develop their skills and abilities. Young people routinely attend suitable education, training and employment, and all are making good progress. They are very motivated to develop their skills and to do well. Young people's preferences are always taken into account and they have opportunities to study and get work experience in areas that interest them, including car mechanics, construction and fire rescue.

Young people and staff have strong links with Connexions. They work together extremely well to identify suitable training and education. They also build young people's confidence and self-esteem about attending college or starting work. This is particularly helpful for young people who may have had difficulties with education in the past.

Staff encourage them to fully take part in the cultural life of the local community. Staff enable young people to follow individual interests, such as seeing friends, keeping fit, football, basketball and watching films. This helps young people to develop confidence in different social settings and feel part of the local area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and how they should be meeting them on a daily basis. The home's records provide a reasonable picture into the individual needs of young people and the plans in place to meet them. This provides clear evidence that young people live in a service that is able to meet their needs and provide the support they require. However, not every young person has a comprehensive and up-to-date written placement plan identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them.

Young people's placements are reviewed regularly by the placing authority to make sure that they continue to meet their needs. Young people usually attend their reviews and their views

are taken into account. The home effectively acts on the outcomes of the reviews to ensure that young people receive the support they require based on their development and changing needs.

Young people are encouraged 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, what they do in their spare time and the plans for their future. Staff actively seek young people's views and ensure that they are listened to and their views about their lives taken into account.

Young people have regular contact with their families and friends to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff actively facilitate and support young people seeing their families, including when they are living a long way from their family. Staff ensure that the contact arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

The home gathers sufficient information about young people before they move in to ensure that the home is able to meet their needs and assess their compatibility with other young people. Young people move into the home in a sensitive way. 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 their way around the local area. Likewise, young people are involved in preparing for leaving the home and know where they will be moving to. Staff provide emotional and practical support for young people leaving the home. Staff contribute to the assessment of young people's needs to ensure that young people continue to get the support they require.

The home has a friendly atmosphere where everyone gets along well. Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff based on warmth, honesty and respect. Staff view young people very positively and value them as individuals. They are helpful and clearly enjoy spending time with young people. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people consistent with good childcare.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are prepared well for adult life. Staff play an important role in assessing young people's abilities and future needs to help them make a successful transition into adulthood. They also coordinate leaving care plans with the placing authority. These are reviewed regularly to ensure that it continues to give young people the support they need. However, some young people do not have their own copy of their pathway plan outlining their future care and support.

Young people are fully involved in making decisions about their future plans, such as where they will live and the support they need to help them develop their life skills. The plans cover the practical skills and knowledge young people will need, but also place a great importance on helping young people prepare emotionally for moving on and ensuring they have a strong support network.

Staff are clear about their roles in helping young people to develop their life skills. They encourage young people to take more responsibility for themselves, suitable to their age and understanding. Young people routinely take part in the daily tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, ironing and handling money. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future. In addition, staff encourage them to

develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene, opening bank accounts, using public transport and getting themselves ready for school and college.

Young people are encouraged to express their individuality in the way they dress. Their clothes are of a good standard and meet young people's needs relating to age, gender and culture. They are always involved in choosing how to spend their pocket money and allowances for toiletries and clothing.

Young people like the accommodation and have personalised the home to reflect their interests and individual tastes. The accommodation is homely and of an adequate standard. However, many areas of the house are not in a good standard of structural and decorative repair. For example, some young people's bedrooms contain damaged furniture, the floor coverings are in a poor state, and the house has not been fully decorated for over a year.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and is fully embraced through the care practices of the home. This includes the staff respecting the cultural and social needs of young people. The home provides care and accommodation for young people with a range of complex behavioural, emotional, social and cultural needs. Staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. The home values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity, and has created an environment where people's differences are accepted. Staff are supportive when young people experience difficulties and take decisive action to deal with all forms of bullying.

Young people know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be looked after. They are involved in developing the children's guide. This ensures it is relevant to them, it contains all the information they need to know about the home, and is written in a way that they can easily understand. Also, the home has a clear written statement for parents and social workers of how the home operates, the services it provides, and plans to meet young people's needs. However, the statement of purpose is not fully up-to-date because it does not contain the name and details of the person responsible for the running of the service.

Staff are very well-supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know who they contact for support should the manager not be available. They confirm that when they need support and guidance the manager is always available and helpful. In addition, they have regular formal supervision and team meetings to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, staff development and training and to look at ways to improve the service they offer.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home well. The staff team reflects cultural backgrounds of the young people living in the home and provides both positive male and female role models for young people. The numbers of staff on duty meets the needs of young people in the best possible way. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

Staff have good access to suitable training. The training programme covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs. Although a majority of staff have a recognised child care qualification, the home does not meet the level of qualified people expected by the standards.

Young people's records are reasonably well-written, show their experiences and progress and contain information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. However, there are shortfalls with some records. Although the home's quality assurance monitoring identifies these areas, action is not always taken to the necessary improvements. For example, making sure each young person has an up-to-date placement plan. In addition, the provider does not routinely find out young people's views about the home when monitoring the running of the home.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
1	revise the statement of purpose to show the name of the current responsible individual for the children's home (Regulation 5.a)	22 November 2009

Recommendations

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

- give young people the opportunity to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against records kept by the home on restraints and sanctions (NMS 22.14)
- ensure each young person has a comprehensive placement plan of their assessed needs, the objectives of the placement and how their needs will be met on a day to day basis (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that each young person's placement plan is monitored by a key worker who ensures that the plan is implemented and kept up to date (NMS 2.2)
- ensure that young people have a copy of their pathway plan (NMS 6.3)
- ensure that the home is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that at least 80 per cent of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people (NMS 29.5)
- ensure that Regulation 33 reports include the view of young people about living in the home (NMS 32.2)
- ensure that action is taken on issues of concern raised during the monitoring of the quality of care. (NMS 33.1)