

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Monica Farrimond
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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 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.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

The purpose of this unannounced full inspection was to inspect all the key national minimum standards to assess how well the home supports children and young people placed there. In addition, the recommendations made at the previous inspection were reviewed. Monitoring and management of the home is satisfactory. The home does not have documentation in place for the young people accommodated to identify needs or to review their progress and development; statutory planning meetings and looked after children reviews are not always taking place within timescales. Responsibility for this also lies with the placing authorities. However, the home has made good progress in some outcome areas, and the manager and staff remain committed to improving the practice in the home. There are three actions and no recommendations made following this inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

A significant number of recommendations were made following the last inspection in February 2010. These have mainly been addressed; these were in relation to management and monitoring of the home and sanctions; the development of placement plans including educational and health promotion, and evaluation of Regulation 33 reports. The recommendations also addressed the fabric of the building which was in need of decorating and some structural repairs. Although the recommendations have mainly been addressed, the recommendations relating to placement plans have not, and are reiterated in this reports as actions.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

All staff are trained in food hygiene, ensuring that safety standards are observed in the kitchen. Young people involved in the preparation of their own meals are supervised by qualified staff to ensure food is handled hygienically and safely. Young people are involved with choosing what they want to eat and independence training is promoted for young people nearing the age when they will move on from the home. This ensures that young people have the skills of budgeting and cooking for themselves, prior to moving on to live independently. The staff and young people eat in the kitchen area, which is suitably furnished and comfortable; this environment promotes orderly, well managed, social occasions.

Young people's health needs are identified at an early stage within the placement by key workers and other care staff; therefore staff are aware of the health needs of the young people. This promotes good, safe practice in relation to meeting health needs. Young people's health and welfare are closely monitored by staff, to ensure that good health is promoted. However, the placing authorities are not always providing statutory documentation relating to health and written care plans are limited. If health care needs are not identified and documented during the initial stages of a placement, progress and development of health care issues cannot be monitored effectively. This leads to a lack of uniform guidance from staff in relation to vital health care advice.

All young people are registered with local health facilities. All staff are trained in first aid and can respond to minor injuries, prior to seeking professional medical advice. All staff have received training in the storage and safe administration of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

This is a home that places children's safety and well-being at the forefront of its philosophy and practice. Clear policies and guidance inform a well structured approach to safeguarding young people.

The fundamental and underlying approach of the manager and staff, is to provide young people with a residential experience that is aimed at meeting their needs and encouraging their development. Young people are enabled to understand their situations and circumstances through a sensitive understanding of their behaviour. Staff work towards enabling young people to adjust unacceptable behaviour through a reward system that encourages and supports achievement and improvement. The service has a well developed complaints procedure and all complaints are responded to promptly. Young people know the complaints procedure and they are confident that any complaint will be taken seriously. This ensures that young people feel that their concerns and opinions are valued.

Staff are quick to intervene, should a bullying situation arise and any issues relating to bullying are handled well, ensuring young people feel safe. Good staffing levels ensure that young people are well supervised.

There are sound procedures and good care practices, which keep young people safe in the home. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to preserving the dignity and privacy of young people and they have a good understanding of safeguarding issues, which ensures that young people are protected from abuse. Training for staff is kept up to date and detailed policies and procedures guide them in their work.

There is a firm anti-bullying approach that discourages young people from being aggressive or abusive to others and a very strong approach to equality and diversity that has a very positive impact on avoiding racism.

The individual identity of young people is recognised, and they are encouraged and enabled to be involved in the running of the home, to complain if dissatisfied and to have their privacy protected. If young people are missing from the home every effort is made to locate their whereabouts and safeguard their welfare by taking prompt action to return them.

The premises are well maintained, subject to rigorous risk assessments and secured against any external threat. The staff are conscientious about checking the building's infrastructure, fire protection and equipment and reporting any shortfalls.

When recruiting staff, the company has rigorous procedures that ensure only suitable people are employed. People do not start work until all necessary and required checks are complete. There is a similar thoroughness in the way that visitors and other people are treated when they are in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

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. Evidence has been seen demonstrating that placement plans are followed through regular supervision sessions with the key worker appointed to each young person. These plans are also monitored by the manager in his weekly review of documentation and evidence seen of recordings of even minor changes to placement plans. Thorough assessment and placement plans ensure children are appropriately placed and supported at the home. Evidence was also seen that any review of placement plan is shared quickly between staff, via email, communications book and at handover.

Young people are provided with a clear understanding of the importance of education and learning and arrangements are in place for them to attend the most suitable provision that meets their needs and abilities. This is based on assessments

of their circumstances and education plans.

Individual support is provided to enable young people to function to their best potential, including external, specialist facilities wherever necessary. Everyone has a named worker whose responsibility it is to coordinate the work and support of individual young people.

There is a strong commitment towards enabling and encouraging children to achieve their potential in both education and leisure activities. There is a range of leisure and social activities provided and available, and the young people are involved, through a monthly meeting, in decisions about what they wish to be involved in. Resources are generous and this enables the home to provide opportunities for young people to have a varied and interesting lifestyle. Those young people who are able to pursue individual activities safely are encouraged to do so.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

All young people have a placement plan based upon an assessment of their needs and abilities that outlines the care that is to be provided. It is a well-established priority of the home to ensure that, even in cases of emergency admissions, all young people's needs are identified at the earliest possible opportunity and strategies to support them put in place. 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 music and rap. Young people confirm that staff spend a lot of time individually with them and are positive about the care they receive.

Arrangements with the placing authority are ineffective in ensuring that plans are reviewed within required timescales. Adjustments to plans are made as necessary or required to maintain a focused approach to meeting young people's needs, but placing authorities are not ensuring that statutory reviews are taking place. Whilst it is acknowledged that the arrangement of these reviews is beyond the remit of the home, the manager and staff must take some responsibility for ensuring they take place.

Careful consideration is given to managing young people's contact with their families. Efforts are made to facilitate the most suitable contact arrangement, based upon needs and planning, for individual young people. This includes establishing working relationships with parents, siblings and other people that are important in the young person's life.

There is a strong emphasis on encouraging young people to participate in, and contribute to, the functioning of the home. There are weekly meetings where children's views are sought on menu planning, meals and activities, which gives young people the opportunity to demonstrate their individual preferences. This is a

positive approach to inclusion and demonstrates to young people that they are important as individuals. Monthly young people's meetings add further value to this approach.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The staff encourage and support young people to take responsibility for their actions and to develop adult responsibilities. Independent living skills are documented in plans drawn up by the home, in conjunction with the young person; thus it is possible to monitor the progress of a young person in this area.

Young people generally experience an environment that is comfortable and pleasant. Bedrooms and the lounge are decorated and furnished to a good standard. The home has recently been re-furnished which has made it more domesticated in appearance.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The service has a Statement of Purpose that sets out how young people will be cared for when they stay at the home. The young person's guide to the service is produced in a child-friendly format, giving young people a clear and detailed picture of how the home works and who will be looking after them during their stay.

Staff are supervised within the preferred timescales, thus personal development and training needs are identified. Staff are encouraged to attend appropriate training to assist them to promote the welfare of young people accommodated at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The manager and staff are knowledgeable of their responsibilities within equality and diversity legislation and good practice, however, the lack of looked after children documentation and outcomes of review meetings impacts on the identification of individual needs of the young people. The monitoring of progress young people make during their stay at the home, cannot be carried out effectively if reviews and planning meetings are not taking place. Staff demonstrate a commitment to supporting young people, however, inadequate information when a young person is initially placed at the home prevents staff from promoting the welfare of the young people effectively.

The management of the home, and monitoring by the manager is satisfactory. Regulation 33 monitoring visits to the home are being undertaken and reports issued to the home. However, both Regulation 33 reports and Regulation 34 monitoring of the home do not identify or evidence concerns in relation to the statutory documentation and requirements necessary for the young people. All information that is sensitive is securely stored, so that confidentiality can be maintained. All recordings observed are respectful and sensitive to young people.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
2	ensure that there is an up-to-date placement plan for each child or young person accommodated at the home setting out how he or she will be cared for, their welfare safeguarded and promoted in the home, arrangements for their health care and education and any arrangements made for contact with parents relatives and friends (Regulation 12(1))	10/01/2011
3	undertake regular reviews of each child's placement plan, including the arrangements made for his health care and education (Regulation 12 (1))	10/01/2011
33	the registered person shall establish and maintain a system for (a) monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals;and (b) improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34 (1) (a) (b)).	10/01/2011