

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Hargreaves
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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 children's home is owned and managed by a charitable organisation that has several homes in the area. It provides medium to long-term care for up to three young people aged from 11 to 17 years.

The house is a semi-detached property set in a residential area. On the first floor, there is a bathroom and four bedrooms, three of which are used by young people and the fourth by staff that sleep in. On the ground floor, there is a lounge, a separate dining room, a kitchen and a separate toilet. The staff office is in the basement and also doubles as a staff sleep in room. The home has parking facilities at the front and there is an enclosed garden to the rear.

There were three young people at the home on the day of the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced key inspection, all the key minimum standards were assessed. The recommendations made at the last inspection were also considered.

The home continues to provide a good standard of care. Staff are trained and qualified for their work. They have a very positive view of the young people they look after, a good understanding of their individual and diverse needs, and how these should be met. Relationships between young people and staff are generally good, which helps to provide young people with a sense of security.

Young people say that they feel safe and treated fairly. They comment that they are able to talk to staff and that staff support them well. Current staffing levels, including enhanced staffing at night, ensure that young people are properly protected and cared for safely. Their health needs are well met.

The value of education is promoted very well within the home so that young people are encouraged to achieve to their own individual potential and to develop aspirations for their future. The daily life of the home enables young people to learn the skills they will need when they leave care.

Minor shortfalls in some aspects of record keeping have been identified as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendations made at the last inspection have both been met.

Records show that staff understand the importance of recording young people's comments when a search has been made of their room, so that young people can understand the reason for the search and can raise concerns if they wish.

If there has been an incident that has resulted in a physical intervention, staff make sure there is a discussion with the young person and that they are asked to record their comments. This gives young people an opportunity to make staff aware of any concerns they may have about the incident.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Good care practices supported by sound procedures ensure that the good health of every young person is promoted.

Staff encourage and support young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They make sure that young people have a balanced diet and give them advice about the importance of healthy eating. Young people choose menus and are involved in shopping and preparing meals, which helps them to develop their knowledge of healthy eating. They are also encouraged to learn about foods from different cultures. Although records are kept of planned menus, these may be changed and there are no clear records of the meals that young people have actually eaten to enable staff to accurately monitor their diet.

Young people are registered with primary health care services, such as a doctor, dentist and optician. Staff support them at health appointments. Staff also make sure that young people are able to receive any additional health support they may need, for example from psychological or substance misuse services. Staff give young people good advice about how to stay healthy, encouraging them to avoid substances and helping them to stop smoking. As part of their overall placement plan, each young person has a detailed health plan that is regularly monitored to make sure that information is up to date and that his or her ongoing health needs are being met.

Robust systems for the safe storage and administration of medication ensure that young people are protected. Staff training in medication issues is kept up to date and detailed records are kept of both prescribed and non-prescribed medication given to young people. These are up to date and accurate. All staff are trained in first aid procedures so that young people are cared for safely in an emergency.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

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The welfare of young people is well promoted and they are protected from abuse. Staff are trained in child protection issues and have a good understanding of their responsibilities and of the procedure they need to follow if concerns are identified.

Bullying is not identified as a particular issue in the home and young people comment that staff deal with any incidents quickly. Individual risk assessments enable staff to identify and minimise potential problems between young people. However, the specific risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances within the home where the risk of bullying may be greatest has not been reviewed to reflect the needs of the group of young people who currently live at the home. Since the last inspection, staffing levels have been increased so that there are two

staff that sleep in every night. This means that staff are able to respond promptly and effectively if there is a difficult situation at night. Young people comment that they are reassured by this.

Young people understand what to do if they have a complaint and there is evidence that they believe that their concerns are taken seriously and are properly dealt with. They are also confident that their privacy is respected. For example, they comment that staff always knock on their doors before entering and that information about them is kept locked in the office. Young people have access to a telephone they can use in private and each young person has a key to their bedroom door so that they can keep their personal possessions safe.

The work staff do with young people helps them to learn to behave in a way that is socially acceptable. Staff are trained to manage behaviour that is challenging, including in the use of physical restraints, although these are only ever used as a last resort. They have a very good understanding of the individual young people they care for, which enable them to respond appropriately to young people in difficult situations and minimise the risk of the need for physical intervention. There have been only three such incidents in the home in the past 12 months, which indicates that young people respond well to the way staff work with and care for them. Young people comment that they are treated fairly and that they are able to talk to staff.

Staff encourage young people to let them know where they will be when they leave the home and keep detailed records so that they know how long a young person has been away. They follow a sound protocol if a young person goes missing, which ensures that all the relevant people are kept informed about the welfare of the young person.

There are effective systems in place to make sure that young people are kept safe in the home or if they are on activities. For example, there is a range of risk assessments on the environment, as well as on young people themselves, which help staff to keep the home safe. Risk assessments are also undertaken on activities young people are involved in outside of the home. Fire and electrical equipment and gas installations are regularly serviced. Young people are involved in fire evacuation drills, so that they know what to do in an emergency.

The organisation has a robust process for staff recruitment, which includes an enhanced check with the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), to ensure that all staff appointed to the home are suitable to work with young people. The identity of all visitors to the home is checked and the home itself is kept appropriately secure, to prevent unauthorised individuals gaining access.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The individual support given to young people is excellent. Person centred planning ensures that there is a thorough assessment of each young person's needs. Plans are specific in identifying the outcomes that the home is seeking to achieve for young people. The home has an effective key working system in place, although young people comment that they can approach any member of the team for support. Individual key work sessions help young people to raise issues that are important to them and enable staff to make sure that plans are being progressed. Staff also make sure that any additional support that a young person may need from other agencies or services is made available to them.

Attendance at school or college is seen as very much part of the established routine of the home. Staff give young people excellent support to enable them to attend school and there is evidence that this has been very successful. For example, young people are having very long-term settled placements in mainstream school and working towards gaining nationally recognised qualifications. Staff also help young people with planning for further education, training and work and young people have aspirations for their future, which enhances their opportunities in life. Staff are also pro-active in supporting any young person who is not in full time mainstream education, working closely with education staff and providing practical and emotional support to help them to re-engage with the education system. All successes in the home are celebrated, which encourages young people to succeed to their individual potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from the emphasis that is placed on identifying and meeting their individual needs, including any specific requirements arising from their culture or religion. Person centred plans, which are based on thorough assessments, show how the home is working to enable young people to achieve. The manager confirmed that these plans are developed in close consultation with young people themselves, but as young people do not sign the plans, it is not possible for the home to evidence that this is the case.

Plans are regularly reviewed to ensure that the placement continues to meet the young person's needs. Staff provide monthly progress reports to placing social workers and a detailed report for the formal review. There is evidence that these meetings are held at appropriate intervals and young people comment that staff support them at reviews. However, notes of the outcome of review meetings are not always immediately available on young people's files so placement plans can be updated promptly.

Staff have a very good understanding of the importance to young people of maintaining positive contact with family and friends. They give practical and emotional support to young people to make sure that this happens.

Young people move into the home in a planned way. Detailed information about the young person is obtained at an early stage, so that the manager and staff can make sure that the home is able to meet the young person's assessed needs. Information about the home is given to the young person and they visit to meet staff and other young people prior to moving in. Staff also make sure that young people leave the home in as planned a way as possible, so that they are properly supported during the transition.

Staff make sure that there frequent opportunities for young people to make their views known and to be part of the decisions that are made about their lives. For example, they have formal house meetings where they discuss issues that concern them, as well as the routines in the home, their activities or menus. Young people also meet regularly with key workers so that they can discuss their care plans and reviews. Relationships between young people and staff are good and young people comment that they feel they are consulted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The daily life of the home encourages every young person to acquire the skills they will need for their future life. For example, young people are involved in shopping, food preparation and helping to keep their rooms and the house clean and tidy. They have helped to decorate their own rooms. Staff encourage them to take responsibility for making appointments at the doctor or dentist so they can learn to do this independently. They spend time in discussion with young people about the ongoing support they will need when they leave care and work closely with placing authorities to make sure that pathway plans are in place.

Young people benefit from living in a pleasant home that is appropriately located in a residential area. The design, layout and use of the accommodation allows young people to have privacy but also to spend time as a group when they wish. Young people comment that they like the home and think that it is comfortable. The property is well maintained overall. Repairs are generally attended to promptly so that young people can see the home is cared for. This encourages them to take pride in their home. At the time of the inspection, there had been some recent damage to the dining room that had not yet been rectified, although the manager confirmed that this is being attended to. The home is warm, welcoming and provides a homely atmosphere.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The manager provides effective leadership to staff and the home is well managed. Young people are cared for by an experienced and capable team who are trained and qualified. Staff understand and can meet the diverse needs of the young people they look after. The numbers of staff employed enables care to be delivered effectively and in accordance with the home's statement of purpose. Recent additions to staffing levels at night have had a positive impact on the supervision of young people.

There are effective systems in place to monitor and evaluate the home's performance, which include the manager's regular checks and visits from an independent person each month. These systems provide the manager with an overview of how the home is operating. The organisation also undertakes a quality audit of the home three or four times a year. Reports from these visits are detailed and the manager takes prompt action to address any issues that are identified. The home has a development plan, but this has not been updated for some time.

The statement of purpose gives good information about how young people are cared for and the manager makes sure that the document is regularly reviewed and kept up to date. The young person's guide to the service gives them good information about how the home works and is presented in a format that is accessible to all young people.

Case files, records and other documents are all in good order, with good cross-referencing, so that young people have a clear, permanent record of their history. All information that is sensitive is stored safely to protect young people's right to confidentiality.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and staff are trained in valuing diversity and promoting equality. This ethos is reflected throughout the organisation's policies and procedures that guide their work. Staff have a very good understanding of the individual and diverse needs of the young people they look after and make sure that the care they receive is planned to meet those needs. They are committed to ensuring that all young people are treated equally

and fairly and that they are helped to understand the importance of this principle in their own interactions, both within and outside 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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- keep records of all the meals eaten by young people (NMS 10.4)
- review the current assessment of the times, places and circumstances within the home where the risk of bullying is greatest (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that person centred plans are signed by young people to evidence that they know their content (NMS 2.6)
- ensure that the outcome of all reviews is available on file so that placement plans can be updated promptly (NMS 3.4)
- ensure that the home has an up to date development plan (NMS 33.4)