

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 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 children's home provides care and accommodation for up to nine young people, of either sex, aged 8 years to 18 years, who present with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The home is a large double fronted detached building, which is located on a residential road close to a town centre and the range of amenities provided there. Nine young people are currently accommodated in the home and the three young people present and were spoken to.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service with outstanding features in making a positive contribution and satisfactory features in enjoying and achieving. Relationships are well maintained and young people obtain great support from staff that are well motivated and understand their needs. Children are clearly put first and this is evident from the insight apparent in care practices and the day to day support that young people are given. Care planning is a strong and central theme in this home and provides the rock bed for care practices. It is noted that some records are a little vague and lack focus. In addition, some maintenance schedules have not addressed areas of repair. It is acknowledged that areas that are awaiting maintenance have been scheduled in many cases, but have not been addressed.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in March 2010, four actions were made. The provider was asked to improve medication administration and provide better support for young people's education. The provider also was asked to ensure suitable furniture was provided and maintained and inform Ofsted when a manager is appointed. In addition, one recommendation was made regarding improving the provision of health guidance for young people. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve the quality of the home for young people.

Medication administration and storage has been reviewed and the home now ensures that robust systems are in place to keep and administer medication and treatments safely. Young people are supported with their education by staff that take an interest and promote education. All staff receive guidance in the importance of promoting education and facilities have been provided for IT support and areas to study. Each young person has a separate record of the support provided by the home and there

are appropriate procedures to promote liaison between home and school.

Furniture is provided that is adequate for the young people and is of good quality. Regular, formal, maintenance programmes ensure that any furniture that is damaged is repaired promptly.

An acting manager is currently in place and he is preparing an application to become the Registered Manager.

The home maintains a policy on promoting health for young people which is currently being reviewed to provide a more comprehensive guide.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from a wide range of choice regarding food and meals. Nutritious and wholesome meals are prepared and all young people are able to express their individual choices. Children's meetings are the formal occasions when young people consult with the staff to express their preferences and staff ensure that young people try new meals and different foods. Menus are presented which depict the chosen meal and these are presented as child friendly with bright pictures.

All staff receive food hygiene training and the home has a dedicated cook that is experienced and trained.

All young people have dedicated health care files to ensure that both their routine and planned healthcare needs are planned and addressed. Each young person is registered with the core healthcare services as soon as they move into the home and this includes the General Practitioner, dentist, and optician. All healthcare interventions and plans are robustly recorded to ensure that each young person benefits from effective monitoring. The home maintains guidance and procedures for staff to support them in promoting healthcare and healthy living. It was noted that although guidance was available, the guidance lacked some detail and the copy available was not the company's most current version. It was however explained that the home are reviewing the current guidance on promoting health.

To ensure young people receive appropriate support regarding medicines and medical administrations robust systems are in place for both the storage and the recording of administration of all medicines. The home has clearly worked hard in this area and has created an efficient and well managed system regarding medications.

All staff receive mandatory training in first aid and medication handling. Strict storage and security measure are in place to ensure the safe keeping of all drugs. Young people benefit from these effective systems, which seek to maintain their healthcare effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

All young people benefit from the understanding that there is respect for their privacy and confidentiality. All bedrooms have locks on their doors and staff will knock and await entry if the young person is present in their room. There are also areas in the home where young people can have appropriate time alone and staff understand the need for young people to have personal time.

Staff are sensitive to young people's privacy and demonstrate particular understanding during times of washing and dressing. There is a private telephone for young people to use and private areas in the home where young people can meet relatives. Young people's information is kept on the wall and on the window sill of the office, offering possible visual access to private information.

Complaints are well maintained and staff ensure that all complaints are handled sensitively and also thoroughly. The young person or complainant is kept informed throughout the process and at the conclusion of the complaint; he or she is asked to sign agreement. If young people are unhappy with the outcome, the home has a procedure to provide an external review of the matter. Young people benefit from being aware that well managed systems of complaint and representation are in place and this builds their confidence to express their views and understand their rights.

All young people are protected by robust and rigorous safeguarding and child protection procedures. All staff have mandatory training in this important area and all staff also have regular refresher training and guidance. The home has a dedicated safeguarding coordinator, external to the home and all matters of safeguarding are overseen by the coordinator. Well written guidance is in place and the home's procedures mirror the expectations and principles of the local authority. There are on-call and out-of-hours systems in place. Additional staff and supervisory staff can be consulted and will attend the home in more urgent situations. Young people are made aware of their rights and expectations of being kept safe.

The home maintains an anti-bullying procedure and this ensures that there are practical systems for capturing any suspected incidents. In addition, young people are aware that staff are proactive in this area and will seek to identify the likelihood of bullying before it develops. Young people are aware that staff are quick to act to address any matters of bullying or intimidation. All staff receive training on signs and symptoms of bullying to ensure that they are aware and knowledgeable in this area.

When young people are absent from the home without permission or missing, the home deploys effective procedures to search, report and recover the young person. All young people have detailed risk assessments to ensure that all relevant factors can be considered in any case of absence. Protocols have been agreed with the local police to ensure any actions taken are coordinated and effective. Upon return, all young people are spoken to, to try to discover the circumstances of their absence

and consider if counter actions are appropriate. When young people act out of character or concerns are particularly heightened, an external visitor visits and meets with the young person to support any areas of concern.

Young people benefit from opportunities to use self-control and develop understanding of maintaining behaviour. The home promotes the view that young people must take some responsibility for their own behaviour. Young people are therefore encouraged to learn how to behave and develop.

When young people are not responsive to encouragement and act negatively systems of control and behaviour modification can be deployed. Sanctions are fair and proportionate and young people say that staff use them rarely. Young people spoken to stated that staff are generally lenient and avoid harsh sanctions where possible. Although sanctions and incident records are in place, recording was in some areas vague and appeared rather muddled. This confusion may frustrate efforts to monitor this behaviour control effectively.

Health and safety and fire safety procedures are in place and the home ensures that all staff and young people partake in regular evacuation drills. A fire plan is maintained for the building and the home uses an outside fire consultant to maintain fire equipment. Health and safety and fire safety risk assessment are also completed and all staff have mandatory training in this area. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and these demonstrate the impact of young people's behaviours as well as the home's environment and consideration of more general risk.

In addition to this, each young person has a comprehensive risk assessment based on both historic and presenting behaviours and these are regularly updated to reflect both the increase, and as importantly, the decrease of risk as young people develop appropriately. Risk assessments demonstrate a rich source of evidence of the difference and diversity of each young person. These assessments avoid blanket assumptions and details clear individual understanding of the young people's needs.

It was noted that two areas requiring maintenance were present regarding fire doors. Although very minor, and likely to have negligible if any, impact on the young people, maintenance schedules should be robust and be able to capture areas awaiting repair.

Young people are safeguarded by robust procedures regarding visitors and recruitment. All staff are appropriately recruited through rigorous employment and recruitment procedures. A well established recruitment panel is maintained and all new employees undergo strict reference and statutory checks. All visitors to the home must identify themselves and sign in and out. No visitor is permitted to have unsupervised access to the home or young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from good support from staff that understand their needs and are respectful of them. There are rich sources of evidence from a host of documents and procedures demonstrating the high level of support young people receive in their day to day care. More formal support is provided through key working and one to one sessions. Young people say that they benefit from the close relationships they have with staff they say that they trust them and know they are in the home to help them.

Key working provides a specific opportunity for young people to express their views, feelings, and wishes and have the opportunity to discuss matters. Although key working is taking place regularly and records are being kept, some examples were not very informative and it was difficult to determine both the purpose of the session and indeed, what the sessions sought to achieve. That said other examples were detailed, informative and made clear links towards care planning and support.

Young people are supported in their education by staff that understand the importance of learning and developing. All young people receive individual support with their after-school studies, extra curricular work and homework. A dedicated IT room is provided within the home, which is well equipped, and staff provide assistance to the young people. Educational files are provided for all young people and these contain the details of the progress of the young people, educational assessments, and records of their achievements. Staff, typically the key worker, will liaise with the young person's school or education venue and provide appropriate support. Key workers attend open days and parental consultation evenings and records are kept of all communication between home and school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person is well supported by a comprehensive and well managed care plan. Care plans and placement plans demonstrate the services and support that each young person will receive. Plans are individual and provide clear consideration and planning for both the diverse and the more day-to-day care needs. Each young person has an additional 24 hour management plan, which provides insight into behaviour and support that may enhance the young person's care. These plans provide a rich source of detail and enhance planning and day to day care practices. Twenty-four hour management plans break down the young person's day. These include details from getting up in the morning to retiring to bed and detail precisely how staff can support that individual and best meet their needs.

Each young person has a statutory review, which is planned by his or her respective placing authority. This ensures that young people have the opportunity to make their views known and a chance to discuss their development. Prior to the review the

homes staff prepare a review report for the meeting. This report provides good support for the young person by detailing their progress since the last review. Review reports are extremely well presented documents that offer a very good insight into the individual progress and development of the young person. Young people also have an opportunity to contribute to this report and their wishes and views can be articulated both within the report and in person, at the meeting.

All young people benefit by staff promoting and supporting their contact with their friends and family. Staff discuss contact regularly with the young people and plan and agree contact sessions. Young people are supported with both the logistical elements, such as transport, but also emotional support to ensure uneventful sessions are experienced. When contact is supervised, staff take detailed notes of the contact session to consider and analyse the benefit that it provides for the young person.

When young people move in or out of the home, staff ensure that young people are supported. Staff provide opportunities for young people to meet staff and the existing young people prior to moving in and ask any questions. If a young person moves in, as an emergency, appropriate review is carried out in accordance with the national minimum standards. When young people move on from the home, staff will increase key working and individual support in order that the young person is given the opportunity to express any concerns or anxieties for the move.

Regular young people's meetings are planned to ensure all young people are provided with an opportunity to express both their collective and individual views. Each meeting has an agreed agenda and young people are able to raise their own points for the discussions. Meeting minutes demonstrate that young people's opinions regarding the operation of the home are canvassed and discussed with staff. Young people say that the meetings provide them with the chance to make their views known and discuss them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

To ensure that young people are provided with the support and guidance as they move towards adulthood, staff have developed a preparation for adulthood. This plan seeks to support future pathway planning and provide the young person with essential life skills. The planning first provides an assessment, which gives the young person a good opportunity to consider where support is needed and what form this should take. Then a plan is developed which includes useful tasks and opportunities to develop skills. Following this, a review takes place to look at progress and consider revisiting any areas of development or consideration of new learning opportunities. Plans provide very supportive and well managed systems to help young people to develop towards adulthood and independence.

The home presents as a large family home and decoration and furnishings reflect this. It is clear that refurbishment is underway with some parts of the home already

benefitting from re-decoration and repair. Areas of the home awaiting refurbishment have already been identified and a comprehensive plan to address these areas has been produced. The acting manager has ensured that work is directed at areas of priority and other areas of less priority will follow. It was noted that the kitchen area was in need of routine maintenance and cleaning, but this had already been identified and was taking place during the inspection.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are provided with good opportunities to express their individuality and diversity. This is evidenced in care planning, review and day-to-day support from the staff members. Staff members encourage and promote young people to express their individual views, formally through dedicated meetings and informally through their day to day care. Policies and procedures underpin principles of individuality and diversity.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose and children's guide which accurately describe what the home sets out to do for children accommodated, and the manner in which care is provided.

There are sufficient numbers of suitably experienced staff on duty to ensure that the needs of the young people are met. There are systems in place to deputise and cover any shortage in staff and more urgent situations. All staff members have a clear job description and guidance and details procedures to clarify their roles. Staff meetings are held regularly to provide staff with an opportunity to discuss the young people and the effectiveness of their care. Staff members are effectively managed and each shift is made up of suitably experienced staff members. Additional staff are available on more urgent occasions and the home operates an out-of-hours and on-call service.

There are 13 staff members in the home and currently approximately 50% of these are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. level three. All staff members receive mandatory training in core areas of care and extra or additional training is sourced appropriate to the needs of the young people. All staff have six monthly evaluation and appraisal and support and training is provided for any area to assist appropriate development.

There are systems in place to ensure that the home is monitored and that action is taken to improve the services for young people. Suitable inspections and checks are carried out in accordance with Regulation 33 and Regulation 34. Action is taken promptly to address any area of shortfall or need for development.

Each young person has a permanent private and secure record of their progress in the home and the services that they are receiving. Young people's records are comprehensive and well managed and all young people's files are kept securely.

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
26	ensure that after consultation with the fire authority the registered person takes adequate precautions against the risk of fire, including the provision of suitable fire equipment (Regulation 32 (10)(a))	28/02/2011
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained. (Regulation 31 (2)(e))	31/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that there is a policy and written guidance, implemented in practice, on promoting the health of children in the home (NMS 12.5)
- ensure that the home and staff respect a child's wish for privacy and confidentiality as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the child and in particular; that private information is out of sight from the outside of the office window (NMS 9.1)
- ensure there is a clear written policy, procedures and guidance for staff based on a code of conduct setting out the control, disciplinary and restraint measures permitted and emphasising the need to reinforce positive messages to children for the achievement of acceptable behaviour, this should include maintaining appropriate records of incidents and sanctions (NMS 22.2)
- ensure that all children are given individualised support in line with their needs and wishes, and children identified as having particular needs receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested. (NMS 7.1)