

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 home is part of the children's disability service offering care for children aged between five and 17 years with learning disabilities and physical disabilities.

The property is purpose built, all on one level and provides accommodation for seven children receiving respite services. Longer-term care can be offered to three young people within an attached bungalow, which is self-contained.

The home is well equipped, offering very good facilities for young people. Externally there are three separate and well-equipped play areas.

The home is situated near a town centre and public transport is accessible.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced key inspection was conducted as part of the planned inspection programme. All key national minimum standards were inspected. This is an outstanding service. Young people's educational, emotional, health, and social needs are comprehensively assessed and met. Parents of young people staying at the home have a very high level of trust in the care provided and say staff communicate extremely effectively. Staff support young people to have high aspirations and achieve their goals. There is strong leadership and effective management monitoring. Staff are skilled at successfully challenging barriers to inclusion and equality which enables young people achieve their potential. There are no actions or recommendations arising from this inspection. There were six young people living at the home at the time of the visit and they all participated in the inspection.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous visit the responsible individual was asked to ensure that 80 per cent of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in The Caring for Children and Young People. This percentage has not been achieved, however this is due to a recent recruitment event which has resulted in an influx of new staff, although only one existing staff member has left. These staff are currently undergoing induction prior to being enrolled on the NVQ level 3. A robust training programme is in place for staff at this home and extensive records show the range and depth of the topics covered is comprehensive. This recommendation will not be repeated as the existing staff team are experienced, competent and highly skilled, ensuring good outcomes for the young people they are looking after. The manager

has demonstrated that satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure new staff will be effectively trained following induction.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from a well-balanced and nutritious diet chosen from a range of healthy options. Fresh fruit and vegetables are available daily. One young person commented, 'They always give us fruit and ask me what I want for tea. We have done pictures of healthy food'. Young people are supported to develop independence skills through meals as a social occasion. Cultural, religious and special dietary needs are catered for. Young people's nutrition has benefited as a consequence of excellent attention to dietary needs in the home and effective liaison with external professionals.

Young people living at this home benefit from thorough assessment of their physical, emotional and health needs. A comprehensive record of these needs is kept and updated regularly. Young people are supported to participate in the health assessment process and their views are robustly recorded in the plan. Staff are made aware of any changes through effective communication systems. Where young people require specialist intervention from health professionals, staff are proactive in seeking advice and vigilant in their monitoring of treatment. Regular activities which promote health and include exercise are built into daily life at the home. Staff liaise effectively and sensitively between parents and external health professionals.

Young people's welfare is safeguarded by robust policies and procedures for administering medication. All staff have training in how to manage medication procedures. Medication is securely stored and daily medication checks are undertaken. Records accurately reflect medication stored in the home. Where young people have complex medical needs, practice is regularly reviewed to incorporate how these are to be met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled. Young people's bedrooms are respected as their private space. Young people's records are securely stored in the office and staff receive training relating to privacy and confidentiality during their induction.

Young people know how to make a complaint and are spoken with regularly by staff and an independent visitor who will pass on any concerns. Information about how to complain is made available in a way that is accessible to the young people staying in the home. The views, wishes and feelings of young people are regularly sought and records and logs express these views thoroughly. Parents feel confident that complaints will be addressed effectively. A typical comment is: 'We are very happy

and impressed with the service we receive from Cromwell House. I do not think there is any area that needs improvement regards the service we receive.' There have been no formal complaints received at the home since the last visit. A concern raised by a parents was thoroughly investigated and resolved to their satisfaction. Any learning arising from such an investigation is immediately incorporated into practice by the staff team. Young people clearly have a high level of confidence in the staff who are caring for them which is reflected in the extremely positive atmosphere of respect and trust within the home.

Young people are protected from bullying by a high level of staff supervision. Young people have been supported to develop a robust understanding of what bullying is and how or where it might happen. This promotes self confidence and increased social skills. Where bullying has occurred this is rare and addressed and resolved immediately with a focus on a positive outcome for all. Young people did not identify bullying as a problem at the time of the visit. Staff plan activities and groupings of young people having regard for positive relationships. New staff are trained in safeguarding procedures during induction and staff demonstrated a thorough understanding of how to respond to allegations or disclosures or abuse. Young people said they feel safe at the home. A young person said 'I feel safe here and I like staff'. Clear protocols are in place for an effective response should any young person go missing from the home and these are followed in practice. Staff response to any safeguarding concern is vigilant and in line with the required procedures. Significant events have been notified within required timescales to Ofsted.

Young people are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour by a consistent focus on rewarding positive behaviour and use of praise. Young people are supported individually to understand the expectations of behaviour and staff use a positive handling plan which clearly outlines specific strategies which will promote success. Staff have a very thorough knowledge of the individual young people and their emotional and behavioural needs. Where intervention is required to divert young people from negative behaviours, staff are able to respond quickly to minimise the intervention. This is due to the high level of staffing in the home and a clear understanding of positive strategies. Young people's future life chances are significantly improved as a consequence of their improved ability to manage difficult emotions and a reduction in angry outbursts. Parent's acknowledge that staff are skilled in responding sensitively. A parent said 'my child is taken out of things if his behaviour is a concern, my child is told why but never made to feel bad about this'. Sanctions are used appropriately. Where physical intervention is used this is as a last resort, the views of the young person are always sought and recorded and management discussion responds to and informs intervention strategies. The staff team meet regularly to monitor the effectiveness of interventions and make adjustments as required to achieve positive outcomes for all individual young people. Recording of incidents and interventions is thorough and analytical, demonstrating a high level of reflective practice.

Young people are protected by robust health and safety procedures. Regular checks and tests are carried out. Fire safety information and guidance is reviewed thoroughly and made accessible to young people whatever their communication

needs. A parent said 'our child has recently helped staff review his individual fire safety personal plan and staff worked hard to ensure he understood its relevance'. A robust risk assessment process is in place for individual young people and specific activities and staff have a thorough knowledge of the risks involved. There are effective procedures in place to ensure that staff are thoroughly checked. Visitors to the home are vetted to ensure the safety of young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their individual needs comprehensively assessed. The staff team are extremely committed to working creatively and imaginatively with individuals to facilitate equal access to services and activities and they work hard to challenge barriers to equality, such as access to rail travel services which they have successfully achieved for their young people. Face to face interactions with young people and recorded information reflect comprehensively their individual views, wishes and feelings. Staff support young people to aim high and become ambitious to achieve their potential. Staff will advocate for young people within their families and in the wider community to achieve their goals. Staff have an excellent knowledge of the individual needs of young people and work hard to promote respect for difference and facilitate the inclusion of all. Placement plans identify any religious ethnic or cultural needs. A typical parental comment is: 'I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff and management of the home for providing a service that is needs led, but very individual in its support to its service users.'

Young people benefit from positive support which enables them to engage with education placements. This significantly increases their future life chances as their potential academic achievement is increased along with their social skills. Where young people have complex needs, daily communication between the home and school ensures health and emotional needs are effectively met in each setting with a smooth transition between them. A parent commented: 'I can honestly say that staff at the unit are truly dedicated and passionate about their involvement with the children. I have seen first hand the excellent interaction and support the staff have with our child.'

The home offers a range of new experiences to broaden young people's knowledge and skills through leisure activities within the home and in the local community. These focus on enabling young people to acquire habits and behaviours which will promote a healthy lifestyle and support positive social relationships in the long term.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from thorough needs assessments which inform a comprehensive care and health plan. Plans clearly identify potential barriers to achievement and goals and strategies to resolve these are identified by staff who

liaise with all involved professionals. The views, wishes and feelings of young people are comprehensively recorded and known to staff. Young people are actively supported to participate in their statutory reviews in a manner which is helpful for them. An independent advocate is available to oversee this process. A parent said 'our child is given choices in many different situations and at all levels'.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with families and friends. Family members are welcome to visit the home. A parent said, 'staff are very approachable, helpful and caring. The home is welcoming for young people, the service is great and communication is good'. Staff work extremely effectively and patiently with families to rebuild relationships where there have been difficulties. This increases life chances for young people by promoting future inclusion into their communities. Young people are supported to speak to family members and social workers on request.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Moves are planned having regard to individual need and at a pace which meets the needs of individuals. Consideration is given to how young people respond to change and provision is made to support this as positively as possible.

Young people benefit from effective consultation and are supported to make decisions about their lives. Staff know the young people very well as individuals and spend time with them every day seeking their views about their care and what happens in the home. These views are recorded thoroughly and made known to all involved in their care. Young people's wishes are represented in all aspects of how the home is run and care provided. A typical parental comment is: 'nothing is too much trouble, my child is happy, they are always at the end of the telephone, written information about my child's stay is precise and accurate'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent care which promotes improved life chances and preparation for adulthood. Staff at this home have played a key role in developing a new transition strategy for this local authority. Planning for transition is taking place in a timely way to ensure young people benefit from comprehensive support which focuses on achieving their potential. Staff liaise effectively with transitions teams and proactively enable young people acquire practical skills which will prepare for adulthood. Progress in all these areas is regularly reviewed.

Young people enjoy spacious accommodation which is decorated and furnished to a very high standard. There is an excellent range of communal space. A parent commented: 'the staff are absolutely wonderful, the service allows us to have a break by looking after our child in an immaculate environment, keeping them safe, and enabling them to have a wonderful time.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people's complex, individual and diverse needs are thoroughly assessed and regularly monitored. Staff work with all individuals to promote respect for difference and inclusion of all. Staff are skilled at challenging barriers to inclusion within the home and in the wider community. The ethos within the home reflects a robust understanding of equality issues. Young people are supported to have high aspirations and enabled to achieve these through inclusion within their community.

The Statement of Purpose provides useful general information about the services and facilities available and the young person's guide summarises this information in a useful and accessible way.

Young people benefit from being cared for by competent staff who are experienced and appropriately qualified. Following a thorough induction, staff are supported by a robust management team who provide formal and informal support through comprehensive supervision arrangements. New staff are enrolled on a National Vocational Qualification following induction. Clear management arrangements are in place to oversee the work of the large staff team. All staff with supervisory responsibility or who lead shifts are effectively trained and experienced. There is adequate handover time to ensure effective communication between shifts. There are sufficient staff on shift at all times to meet the needs of the young people being looked after and staffing levels are increased to reflect the changing needs or numbers of young people when required.

The home is very well managed and organised. There are robust procedures for monitoring the operation of the home including weekly management meetings where any shortfalls are identified and addressed. Young people have permanent records of their progress which are securely stored.