

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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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 local authority children's home that provides care and accommodation for six children and young people of either sex. The home aims to provide a period of stability for children and young people with complex needs in an environment with a therapeutic emphasis and where there is multi-agency involvement in addressing their needs. Children and young people stay at the home for periods in excess of six months and are helped to return to their families, to move to substitute family placements and to more independent placements. The home is located in a rural setting with local facilities in close proximity.

Summary

This is a good service in most respects with some outstanding features. There is a strong emphasis on relationship building with young people with consistent support and input from external professionals. This is being enhanced and developed through the implementation of the Social Pedagogy theory later this year. Outstanding work has been achieved with regards to the implementation of the quality assurance and monitoring system. Young people speak highly about the quality of support they receive. They make reference to challenging situations they often find themselves in but can still rely on a consistent and fair approach from the staff team. Young people's one observation of the service which requires improvement is the décor and physical appearance. External professionals share similar views. External professionals also comment on the effectiveness of the staff team which supports young people for a variety of reasons such as their education and emotional wellbeing. The service is non complacent. It thrives on the success of young people's involvement in meaningful activities and personal development whilst seeking new ways to empower and embrace young people in an environment where self-respect and self-worth are key priorities.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered manager was asked to improve the physical standards of the home and to improve its appearance. The graffiti has now been removed from the main entrance to the home which is more inviting. Although work is outstanding to improve the appearance in other areas, a programme of redecoration is now in place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy and well balanced meals which are freshly prepared. Foods are purchased locally and where possible this includes young people's involvement. Independence programmes are in place for young people preparing to move on to semi-independent or independent living. The home's approach to giving young people opportunities to learn about different foods including cooking and entertaining are wide ranging. This is included in the Wednesday Night group which includes contributions from young people, staff and external professionals. Kitchen facilities are adequate and well maintained. Sufficient dining facilities are provided for staff, young people and their guests to share meals together.

Young people say that healthy lifestyles are promoted and supported. This includes the quality of meals and the different types of support received if unwell. Strong links are maintained with GP's, the nurse and primary health professionals. In addition, excellent links are maintained with key professionals from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). In doing so, there is a strong focus in addressing young people's holistic health needs taking into account their mental health and emotional wellbeing. Health records are maintained to an exceptionally high standard and routinely monitored. Young people benefit from a range of health services and provisions which they may access independently or with support.

Thorough procedures are in place for the safe receipt, storage, administration, recording and disposal of medications. These procedures are monitored by delegated staff. In addition, delegated staff ensures that First Aid kits are appropriately stocked. Staff undertake relevant training in the management of medications. This is updated at regular intervals. The storage, administration, recording and disposal of controlled drugs is also satisfactory. The safety of administering medications is enhanced by ensuring that parental consents are obtained and authorisation for the administration of household remedies is given by an appropriate medical professional.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and dignity is respected in a number of ways. For example, all young people are accommodated in single bedrooms, a telephone booth is provided for personal calls and a range of written agreements are in place with individual young people. Appropriate arrangements are in place when using bathing and toilet facilities. Adequate facilities are provided for the storage of confidential files. Staff also confirm that they are familiar with the codes of practice regarding confidentiality and data protection.

Young people say they feel listened to. They are encouraged to express their views, feelings and concerns in a variety of ways. This includes the use of the complaints procedure. Records show that young people's views are taken seriously. All complaints are investigated and responded to within reasonable timescales.

Effective systems are in place for enhancing young people's safety and protection. This includes the frequency and quality of staff training, established links with external professionals such as the police and significant work undertaken on an individual basis with young people. Written guidance on child protection and safeguarding is accessible to all staff.

Young people are supported to live in an environment where bullying is not accepted. Prompt action is taken on occasions when there are known issues relating to bullying and unacceptable behaviour towards others. Young people say that they are confident that staff will respond to incidents appropriately.

The implementation of the policy for responding to young people who are absent without authority is effective. This includes prompt liaison with relevant professionals and, where possible, careful monitoring of communication with young people during their absence. Young people say they feel fully supported by staff on their return. The numbers of incidents involving young people being absent without authority varies and there are patterns when these are significantly high. However, they are often linked to individual young people expressing their feelings and emotions through absconding.

The recording of significant events is vigorous including effective tracking and monitoring systems. Although notifiable incidents are reported to Ofsted as required under Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001, currently, this process does not always include the reporting of police involvement for incidents which may occur outside the home setting.

The expectations of acceptable behaviour are clearly communicated to young people. These are reinforced through the efficiency of care planning, the promotion of maintaining positive relationships with young people and effective communication systems with staff, young people and external professionals. Young people accepts the home's approach towards behaviour management. They say that physical restraint is rarely used and this is only done to keep them and others safe. Resolutions are often achieved through the restorative approach. The home continues to use the Team Teach methods of physical intervention. This is coordinated by an on site Team Teach trainer and staff are required to attend routine refresher training. Records indicate that the use of physical restraint is significantly low and very seldom used. Sanctions are imposed to reinforce socially acceptable and responsible behaviours. Behavioural management records are maintained to a very high standard. This includes the quality of monitoring and evaluation.

Health and safety systems and processes are kept up to date and in good order. Safety is enhanced through the implementation of a comprehensive risk management process and routine checks such as gas and electrical are carried out by approved contractors. Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from risk of fire. Fire drills are carried out periodically and the recording of drills has improved. Staff attend refresher training on fire safety and fire safety is included in the induction for new staff.

Young people's safety and protection is enhanced through careful recruitment and selection procedures. These processes are vigorous and include input from young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality and types of support are highly valued by young people. Young people can relate this to their past experiences. In doing so, they speak extremely positively about how they are cared for and given opportunities to develop the skills to cope in different situations. Young people often stay in touch with the home after they have moved on and written comments about the duration of their stay reflects their appreciation. Young people benefit from a well established key worker system. Extensive work is also carried out to provide the support for young people in line with their needs and wishes. For example, a personal guide is devised and tailored for young people who may require assistance for adapting to new routines and expectations.

Educational professionals say that the home does exceedingly well in maintaining an inclusive approach for achieving the best outcomes for young people. This includes professionals' input at various meetings and activities, staff contributions towards education meetings and the home's relationship with schools which is consistent and constructive. School attendance is often a matter for improvement. However, this is acknowledged and intense work is undertaken to address factors and triggers which may impact on young people's interest in attending school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's assessed needs are identified and met through comprehensive care planning processes. Where possible, young people's wishes are sought and taken into account. Care plans are maintained to an exceptionally high standard. The content of care plans is shared with young people in accordance with their level of understanding.

Effective processes are in place for reviewing and evaluating young people's needs and development. This is achieved through formal review meetings and informally through discussion and consultation with young people. Social workers say that staff are skilled in engaging young people in all aspects of their care. They also say that staff are reliable in communicating any changes to a young person's care.

Young people receive practical and emotional support for constructive contact with families and significant others. Prompt action is taken when concerns are raised regarding contact and the impact this may have on a young person's safety or wellbeing.

The admissions and discharge procedures are thorough and vary in accordance with the young person's circumstances. Pre admission procedures include direct contact with the young person and relevant information, such as a photo album and the Children's Guide, is shared prior to initial visits.

Opportunities are created and identified for young people to take part in consultation activities both in and out of the home. External opportunities for engaging young people in consultation processes include the recruitment of senior staff and educational activities. Staff are creative in engaging young people in meaningful discussions and activities about their lives and how the home is run. For example, young people have been consulted on Social Pedagogy which is being introduced this year. Young people are pleased with this initiative and confident about the recruitment of two Pedagogues. The Wednesday Night group is one of the successes, combining enjoyment and learning through consultation between young people, staff and invited guests.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Comprehensive work is undertaken by all staff for preparing and supporting young people for moving on. This includes practical support and guidance for ensuring that young people benefit from external services. In addition to Pathway plans, in house plans and procedural guidance for specific tasks are devised with young people. These are effective for enabling young people to carry out tasks with intermittent support as they progress towards independence. Young people say that they benefit from the different types of support they receive, including staff involvement in helping them identify suitable work placements, managing their finances, housing and behaving more responsibly.

Young people do not enjoy an environment which is well maintained and homely. This observation is shared by young people and visiting professionals. Young people commented on the lack of homeliness and the need for refurbishment. Parts of the home require complete redecoration including walls and ceilings. A confirmed timetable is now in place for redecoration to commence throughout and the start date is imminent. Two large garden boxes have been assembled on the rear patio which enables young people to grow a mixture of flower and vegetable plants.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

An up to date Statement of Purpose is in place. A Children's Guide is also in place. Both documents are in keeping with the criteria as set out under Regulation 4 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The Children's Guide is in a form appropriate to the age and understanding of the children in the home.

Young people benefit from a consistent and experienced staff team. There are clear arrangements in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the registered manager. Staff who are placed in charge of the home at other times, such as appointed seniors and shift leaders, are suitably experienced and demonstrate a sound knowledge about the running of the home and young people's needs. Currently, the numbers of staff with the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent exceeds the minimum ratio of 80%. The registered manager is suitably qualified and experienced. Proper time is allocated for handovers and staff meetings. This time is used constructively.

There are sufficient staff on each shift to meet the needs of young people. Young people's safety and welfare needs are met by increasing the numbers of staff on duty when required and continuity of staff is also maintained.

Staff benefit from a comprehensive induction process and opportunities for professional development. This includes a combination of self-funding courses and sponsorship through the local authority. The types of training staff attend are wide ranging and relate to practice and involvement with young people.

An established quality assurance and monitoring system is now in place and fully operational. It provides a wealth of information demonstrating the home's performance against its Statement of Purpose, its functions and measurable outcomes for young people. The methods for providing this information are exceptional and easily linked to daily records and practice. Supporting evidence includes an annual development plan and a full and comprehensive review of the service over the last year. The review considers all of the Every Child Matters outcomes and beyond. It includes statistical information including incidence of police involvement, safeguarding and key aspects of behavioural management and intervention. Other key aspects focus on young people's achievements, staffing information and financial management.

All young people have a permanent and private file which is kept securely. Daily files and records are accessible but also kept securely and confidentially. Young people's files are well maintained and meets the criteria as set out under Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is evidenced through the diversity of cultural diets through 'themed' nights and young people's input into daily menus. Complaints are investigated appropriately, fairly and sensitively. They do not relate to issues of equality and diversity. Young people's safety and wellbeing are enhanced through effective risk management to address issues of bullying between young people. Staff are knowledgeable about each young person's needs. Opportunities are created for young people to discuss their needs. This is achieved in a number of ways. Individual and diverse needs are identified through well managed care planning processes. Young people benefit from a staff team who are

consistent, skilled and well trained to provide their care. Management systems are more robust now and a wide range of outcomes for young people are evaluated in detail.

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):

- inform Ofsted of incidents involving the police which may occur outside of the home setting (NMS 20)