

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

Healds Road is a children's home for six young people aged 10 to 17 years. It is a home for children who are vulnerable, and for different reasons are unable to live with their families. The home is a purpose built two storey detached house run by Kirklees Metropolitan Council.

The first floor of the house has individual children's bedrooms with hand wash basins, bathroom, toilets and shower room. The ground floor has a lounge, kitchen with dining area, utility room, computer room, staff office and manager's office. A conservatory at the rear of the house provides an additional lounge area. There is an enclosed grassed garden to the rear and front of the house. To the side of the house is driveway with car parking for several cars. The home is approximately 10 minutes bus ride from the town centre. There are general shops at the end of the road and the home is on a bus route. A secondary school is in walking distance and leisure facilities, such as the cinema and swimming baths are a bus ride away.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced inspection, all key standards were inspected. The home has a positive approach to equality and diversity, and the young people are supported to achieve their potential both educationally and socially.

There have been positive improvements made since the last key inspection. The health of the young people is enhanced by the balanced nutritional meals provided, and with the health resources available, young people have a better understanding of how to look after themselves especially when they move into independence.

Young people are cared for by staff who are committed to their welfare and safety. Staff are encouraged to achieve appropriate qualifications to enhance their professional skills. Most staff now

have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in caring for Children and Young People.

Opportunities for young people to influence the life of the home are largely limited to weekly house meetings. In addition some young people have not read their files. There is however, a commitment at the home to improve the involvement of young people, and this is reflected in the staff selection process which now involves a panel of young people. This is good practice.

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager was asked to ensure that all appropriate documentation relating to the young people is complete, that the staff selection process be reviewed to involve young people, for education resources to be provided for young people not in full time school and to ensure staff training takes place. The manager has taken appropriate steps to comply with all actions and recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people are provided with meals that are nutritionally balanced. Staff ensure that fresh food prepared each day includes vegetables. The young people are involved in planning the menu each week and compromises are made over young people's choices of meals. Some young people commented that 'the food is excellent I love the food here'. The main emphasis is on providing the young people with healthy meals and to involve them in meal preparation. This is regarded as an important part of teaching the young people a skill, which will be essential when they move into independence. There is a positive emphasis on equality and diversity, which is demonstrated by the variety of meals served representing the different communities from the local area. This helps promote a better understanding among the young people about different cultures.

The health information about each young person has up to date details of individual health needs. The looked after children's nurse is responsible for ensuring that health assessments are carried out when a young person moves into the home. There are good liaison links with the local health service and the children have access to specialist health resources as required. The home has a medication policy, procedure and practice guidance which address the use of non-prescribed medication. Staff have received medication training in medicines administration, and they are aware of the importance of ensuring that all medication records are kept up to date. All medicines are kept secure and locked in a metal cabinet located in the office. The staff actively help the young people to take an interest in looking after their health, and work with the young people to encourage health consciousness about their personal lifestyles.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff are aware of the right of the young people to their privacy. Staff always knock on bedroom doors before entering. The issue of confidentiality is properly understood by all staff at this home. The local authority policy is very clear, and staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure that all children's information is kept safe and secure. All case files are securely stored in a locked cupboard in the office. This promotes the overall safety of young people.

The home has a complaints procedure, and the young people are aware of how to make a complaint if they are unhappy about an issue. Most issues are dealt with by staff informally outside of the complaints procedure, although information about how to make a formal complaint is readily available to the young people. Safeguarding the young people is taken seriously by staff, and appropriate training in this area has been provided by the local authority. There are clear procedures for staff, on how to respond to child protection concerns. Young people say they feel safe living at this home.

The young people confirm that bullying is not an issue, although for some, this has taken place in the past. However, staff know that this can be a problem given the mix of young people placed at this home. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to deal with such issues early on and to ensure it is stopped. The restorative approach to addressing incidents of bullying appears to be an effective method of dealing with this.

The home has a written procedure for action to be taken if a young person goes missing. An agreed protocol is in place with the local police, on the actions that will be activated once they are notified of a missing young person. Staff base their behaviour management of young people on adopting a low-level approach to potential confrontations, by keeping the situation as calm as possible. Staff pride themselves on the low level of restraint used at the home. Training in behaviour management is mandatory and this is refreshed annually. Any incidents are recorded in a bound and numbered book. Some entries however, have not been signed by the manager. Sanctions imposed as a result of inappropriate behaviour are similarly recorded in the appropriate log book. The young people can add their comments to this record.

Risk assessments are in place covering all activities, and there are also individual risk assessments for young people. There is a good awareness of practical safety within the home, and fire tests and evacuations are practised in line with council policy. All safety appliances are checked and appropriate certificates are kept at the home. This ensures the safety and well being of young people and staff.

There is a robust recruitment procedure in place and all candidates for work are cleared by the Criminal Records Bureau before commencing work at the home. Young people are actively involved in the selection process for new staff, and this demonstrates a positive approach to equality and diversity.

The outcome is that young people live in a safe environment with staff who are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that all aspects of safety are maintained to a high level.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home has good links with external agencies that can, if required, provide specific support for young people. This includes use of local community resources if a young person is from an ethnic minority background. The home operates a key worker system whereby each young person has two named staff who they can contact for support. The support systems for young people are good and ensures that each young person has an adult they can confide in. Any health related issues will be addressed by the Looked After Children's nurse who can access additional resources if required.

Staff take an active role in helping the young people to receive full time education. They also support the young people with school issues concerning attendance or behaviour. Each young person has a Personal Education Plan in their case records explicitly indicating the young person's educational needs, and how these will be met. If any young person is excluded from school, staff take an active part in negotiations with the relevant parties to agree temporary teaching arrangements, to ensure least disruption to their education as possible. This ensures that the young people are not disadvantaged educationally, and demonstrates a good approach to equality and diversity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

There are care plans in place for each young person, with evidence to show that statutory reviews have taken place. The plans include appropriate information, and young people are encouraged to take an active part in their reviews, and are able to make their views known to the review meeting. This ensure that young people have ownership of the plan and can influence decisions made about them.

Contact with family is recognised as being an important part of the care plan. Staff provide active support for the young people to make this possible. A telephone is available for the young people to contact their family, and staff are on hand to support young people if any difficulties arise when family contact takes place. By supporting and enabling contact to take place, young people retain an important link with their family and relatives.

Where possible, admissions to the home are generally planned in advance, and young people and their family are encouraged to visit the home to meet staff and other young people prior to the placement commencing. It is carried out with sensitivity to enable the young person to settle at their own pace.

The views of the young people about life in the home are generally given at the weekly house meeting. A suggestion box is located in the office. There are however no other consultation methods apart from staff consulting with the young people on an ad hoc basis. The young people felt that they did not have a lot of influence on the day to day operation of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff work closely with the leaving care team to plan in advance when a young person is nearing the end of their placement. The pathway plan involving all relevant professionals and the young person, ensures that appropriate support is in place as they move towards independence. Young people who are preparing to leave care confirm they have been consulted about their plan. Staff at the home play a key role to prepare the young person for the move towards independence, and ensure as far as possible they have the necessary skills to cope with their next placement.

The home is located in a residential area. The young people each have their own bedroom, all of which are comfortably furnished. Bathing and toilet facilities are in good order, as is the rest of the house. A disabled toilet is located on the ground floor. There are two lounges for the young people to relax and socialise, and both of these rooms are comfortably furnished. One of the lounges which is designated as a quiet room has a computer for the young people to use. This offers internet access and is protected from unauthorised sites. A new conservatory that has recently been built, provides the young people with a spacious room for playing pool and to engage in social activities. The home supports young people to learn how to socialise and increase their self confidence.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff at this home have a positive approach to equality and diversity. The local authority provides all staff with mandatory training in this area. Young people are encouraged to achieve their potential and to take advantage of the opportunities to support them as they move towards independence. Staff encourage the young people to developing a greater understanding of different cultures. Where appropriate, the resources of the local ethnic minority community will be asked support some young people who are preparing to leave the home and settle locally.

The statement of purpose is clear about setting out what care the home can provide, and how this will be provided. It details the resources available at the home. Staffing information however, relating to qualifications and experience is out of date. The document is presented in a form that can be understood by families and placing authorities. The young people's 'Welcome Pack' contains a user-friendly booklet about the home, and this was drawn up with the assistance of young people. This is good practice.

The staff at the home are supervised by the manager and two deputy managers, who are responsible for day-to-day operations and professional supervision of all staff. The staff team work well together, although due to some absences, casual bank staff are helping out on shifts to ensure staffing levels are maintained. This is a competent staff group who have a range of experiences. Currently 75% of the staff are qualified at NVQ Level 3 in 'The Care and Supervision of Children and Young People'. However, all remaining staff are either enrolled on this course, or, are completing induction training. The number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the care needs of the young people, and to provide appropriate support. The young people are satisfied with the support from staff and no concerns have been highlighted. This demonstrate that young people are being appropriately cared for and they are safe.

There is a training programme in place for all staff that includes mandatory training in key areas, such as child protection, safety, medicines and behaviour management. All new staff undergo compulsory induction training. Every member of staff has a personal development plan that clearly indicates the training completed and planned training to improve professional skills.

The monthly monitoring visits are carried out by a manager of the local authority and this is also part of the overall quality assurance system of the home. The reports highlight areas requiring action and these are expected to be completed up by the manager prior to the next visit. The management team share the responsibility to ensure that key records are checked each month.

The young people's case records are kept secure in the office. The monthly report is the main document that shows the progress being made against the outcomes from Every Child Matters. This

involves the young person and their key worker. Some young people have not signed as having read the document. It is policy that young people can see their files, and this is made clear to them when they move into the home. However, some young people said that they did not know when they last read their files.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the statement of purpose is updated to include the names and qualifications of all staff (NMS 1.2)
- ensure that young people are aware that they can read their files. (NMS 35.2)