

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	07/11/2013
Inspector	Peter Harrell
Type of inspection	Full
Provision subtype	Children's home

Date of last inspection	18/12/2012
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Service information

Brief description of the service

This home is one of a number of children's homes operated by a city council. It provides care and accommodation for up to five young people who have emotional and/or behaviour difficulties. This home is described as an 'admissions unit' where the intention is to move young people on to more suitable care and accommodation, such as a return to their parental home, identified foster placement, preparation for independent living, or a long-term children's home.

The inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: a service of exceptional quality that significantly exceeds minimum requirements

Good: a service of high quality that exceeds minimum requirements

Adequate: a service that only meets minimum requirements

Inadequate: a service that does not meet minimum requirements

Overall effectiveness

The overall effectiveness is judged to be **good**.

The home currently provides a good level of care for young people. They live in a comfortable and homely environment which is managed well with a stable staff team. There are positive and enduring relationships and, in relation to their starting points, young people make good progress in educational attainment.

Staff at the home take account of young people's individual needs. Young people say that they feel safe and are well cared for. Staff are committed to advocate for and support young people in all aspects of their lives and promote future care arrangements or moves to independent living.

Professionals outside the home report positively regarding the level of care the young people receive. The staff training provided is relevant to meeting their needs.

Shortfalls are identified in connection with not having food on offer at the home which reflects young people's cultural and ethnic heritage and to make sure the protocol used to respond when young people go missing is up to date. There are a high number of incidents of young people going missing since the last inspection and consequently there are two good practice recommendations to provide support and minimise risk on the occasions when these incidents take place.

The Registered Manager and assistant manager of the service are aware of these areas and are committed to improve young people's outcomes.

Areas for 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 person(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Reg.	Requirement	Due date
13 (2001)	ensure that any special dietary need of a child accommodated in the home, due to their racial origin or cultural background, is met (Regulation 13(2))	31/12/2013
16 (2001)	ensure the procedure to be followed when any child accommodated in the home is absent without permission has regard to any relevant and current local authority or police protocols on missing children. (Regulation 16 (4)(b))	31/12/2013

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the care and support provided to children minimises the risk that they will go missing and reduces the risk of harm should the child go missing (NMS 5.1)
- ensure that children are helped to understand the dangers and risks of leaving the home without permission and are made aware of where they can access help if they consider running away. (NMS 5.8)

Outcomes for children and young people

Outcomes for young people are **good**.

This children's home values each young person as an individual; they benefit from support from their keyworkers, which helps to improve their self-esteem. Consequently, young people are more secure and have increased confidence. Achievements are celebrated which further enhances their sense of positive well-being.

From their beginning points, young people are supported to achieve targets of educational attendance and attainment and their educational needs are fully supported. Staffs communicate well with the schools and attend educational reviews

as appropriate. Young people's participation at college and school increases through consistent messages and encouragement from staff at the home. Young people say staff support them to do well at school or college. As a consequence, their ability to achieve and learn, and for some young people, to progress to attain qualifications, has increased.

Young people's views are sought through questionnaires, residents' meetings and key-worker sessions. Young people's reports indicate young people participating and feeding back their views and feelings to their key workers and other staff at the home. Being involved in the day-to-day activities which take place in the home is viewed as important for young people; they say they can raise issues which concern them formally or informally with members of staff.

In order to improve health outcomes, young people receive support in many aspects of this area of care. The promotion of young people's health needs takes place with a proactive emphasis on sexual health and relevant leaflets and information are readily available. Therefore, young people are more informed in this aspect of their care.

Young people are fully supported with contact visits and telephone calls; they benefit from additional emotional support of staff at these times. This enables young people to maintain significant relationships with their friends and family members.

Quality of care

The quality of the care is **adequate**.

The meaningful relationships which exist between the staff and young people living in the home is a strength of this service. Staff ensure that the needs and wishes of young people are met while carrying out their duties in both a supportive and a professional manner. Young people's care is enhanced by living in a nurturing environment where genuine and supportive relationships exist. A staff team, being mixed in gender, experience and ethnicity, enhances the level of care which is provided to young people.

The care plans for young people are in accordance with any assessments and the admission criteria of the home. Care plans provide necessary information and account is taken of the complex needs of the young people including their cultural, health and behavioural needs. They are referred to by keyworkers and at young people's reviews. This promotes consistency and individuality in the quality of care received, so that young people's preferred routines are carried out. Young people's achievements are also regularly celebrated.

Young people are positive regarding the support provided to them and their experience of living at the home. Young people gain from positive praise and participation in a range of activities of their choosing. One young person said of the home: 'It is a good place, staff do look after you here and there is staff to talk to if I need to.'

Young people have requested on several occasions, food on the menus which reflects their ethnic identity. However, this has not being fully acknowledged by the home and action taken to address this matter has not been forthcoming. Therefore, not all young people's specific cultural needs are being met.

First aid training is provided for all staff. Young people at the home are supported to attend regular appointments with health professionals. This ensures young people have access to suitable medical treatment when needed. The management of medicines is robust.

The staff team has worked closely with education providers to improve the attendance and engagement of young people. As a consequence, young people's attendance at school has improved; this is because there are consistent messages and encouragement from staff at the home. Staff also enable young people to consider their actions and reactions and support them to set positive personal goals

Safeguarding children and young people

The service is **adequate** at keeping children and young people safe and feeling safe.

Young people report feeling safe and believe that staff, who they feel they can raise concerns with, work to ensure their safety at all times. Staff at the home are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and are aware of local authority safeguarding guidance. Safeguarding training, which is offered by the local authority is comprehensive and takes place on a regular basis. This ensures that staff have up-to-date knowledge regarding how to protect vulnerable young people.

There have been eight notifications since the last inspection, one of which was a child protection incident. This incident is recorded clearly, dealt with promptly and was managed appropriately. The Registered Manager reports matters, seeks relevant advice from a range of professionals outside the home and is knowledgeable regarding issues of protecting young people from sexual exploitation.

Where challenging behaviour is exhibited by young people, staff are proactive to deal with these situations and restraint is seldom used in the home. All staff have received training in this area and records reflect that it is only used when other methods have not been successful.

Procedures are in place for young people who go missing, linked to young people's behaviour plans and individualised risk assessments. However, since the last inspection, there have been 73 incidents of young people going missing and it is not clearly evident that staff and management are consistently looking at triggers for when this high level of incidents take place.

At times when the whereabouts of absent young people is known and when young people return to the home, there is insufficient evidence to show that young people have been consulted or how recurring incidents are prevented. The protocol between the service and the police regarding missing persons is due to be updated but at the

time of the inspection, the Registered Manager was referring to a draft document. These shortfalls, if not remedied, will impact upon the safety and vulnerability of young people when their whereabouts is unknown.

The Registered Manager has put procedures in place which follow the local authority's safer recruitment practices. There has been an audit of all staff records with a detailed checklist put into place on all files, which are securely held in the home. Since the last inspection, a new member of staff has been appointed. Correct references and checks were completed. These practices make sure recruitment of staff in this home is robust and ensures that young people are protected from harm.

The home's approach to health and safety matters is more rigorous since the last full inspection. Records within the home indicate fire drills are more frequent, the environment is physically safe and secure, taking close account of the needs of the young people, as well as having correct safety signage visible in the home.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the children's home are **good**.

The home is overseen by a longstanding and very committed Registered Manager. Care is provided to young people from a dedicated group of staff, who are positive about those they look after and want them to succeed. The staff also receive regular supervision and annual appraisals where the Registered Manager and assistant managers ensure that staff understand their roles and responsibilities, so that young people's needs are met.

Detailed training and development plans and up-to-date Statement of Purpose are in place. These documents are very clear and informative and outline the service's aims and objectives. Systems are in place to monitor the performance of the home, including visits undertaken on behalf of the provider which happen regularly, and several of which are also unannounced.

The service is resourced sufficiently, to make sure that young people have good staffing ratios together with access to leisure interests and purposeful activities. The staff team are enthusiastic about their work with young people who they know and understand well. Staff receive training which enhances their individual skills; they are positive regarding the variety and quality of training provided which they say is relevant to their work with individual young people.

Young people receive information in a guide which is accessible which allows them to have a good understanding of what to expect from the home.

Health and safety checks of the environment are regularly carried out by staff. Risk assessments are routinely reviewed. Fire procedures have been developed and are efficiently followed and there is a regular plan of maintenance in place at the home. This ensures that young people live in a safe environment.

At the last inspection, one requirement and one recommendation was made. Reports of the visits undertaken on behalf of the provider are now sent to Ofsted promptly and the young person's guide has been and will be translated where a young person's first language is not English. This improves the quality of care provided to young people and ensures there is better quality monitoring of the service in place.

The management team in the home and the local authority refer to the inspection process as useful to help them improve the quality of care provided to young people.

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 to assess the effectiveness of the service and to consider how well it complies with the relevant regulations and meets the national minimum standards.

The report details the main strengths, any areas for improvement, including any breaches of regulation, and any failure to meet national minimum standards. The judgements included in the report are made against the *Inspections of children's homes – framework for inspection* and the evaluation schedule for the inspection of children's homes.