

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
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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 one of a number of children's homes operated by a local authority. The home provides care and accommodation for five young people of either sex, aged 11 to 17 years at any one time, who may be experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The home is a large detached 1960s property, situated in a quiet corner of a residential area adjacent to a community farm. Local bus routes located nearby provide easy access to the amenities of the city centre.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced, key inspection took place over one day. The inspection covered all of the key standards for children's homes. This forms part of the annual inspection programme to examine the standard of care and services provided to young people. At the time of inspection, four young people were accommodated. However, only three of the four participated in the inspection process.

The home continues to provide a very good standard of care to young people which ensures that good to outstanding outcomes are achieved for them. This is endorsed by comments made by young people, observations made and records seen.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were identified at the last inspection. These related to the need to make improvements in the recording of complaints and where young people go absent without consent. The Registered Manager has taken prompt action to address these areas of deficiencies to ensure compliance.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and supported to eat a healthy, varied and balanced diet. They are fully involved in the planning of the menus which includes the opportunity to try a range of meals from different cultures. In addition to the agreed menus, individual records are maintained of all meals eaten and refused by young people. Opportunities are readily available for young people to be involved in the shopping, preparation and cooking of some meals as part of their independence skills

training with the support of staff. This was evident during the inspection, with three young people cooking individual main meals.

Young people live in an environment where their health care needs are met. Young people are registered with the local General Practitioner, dentist and optician. Staff fully support young people to access these services and suitable records are maintained of their appointments. Various specialist intervention is provided to meet the specific needs of young people. Young people's health care needs are well reflected in their individual placement care plans. Support, advice and information are also readily available to young people on a range of other health care issues.

The home ensures that the welfare of young people in relation to medication is safeguarded. Safe medication storage practices are maintained with all medication being kept secure in facilities in line with best practice. Suitable systems are established for the recording of medication received, administered and returned. All staff have received first aid and medication training. Staff tend to administer any medication to young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff promote the rights of young people by ensuring that their privacy and dignity are respected. Young people's information is also kept secure and staff understand the need to keep their information confidential as well as being clear about the limits of confidentiality.

Clear policies and procedures are established for dealing with complaints. Young people clearly understand this process and they are fully supported to raise any issues of concern openly. Three complaints have been received since the last inspection. Records demonstrate that all complaints are responded to promptly with appropriate action being taken to address them.

The welfare of young people is promoted and protected. Appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures are in place with all staff receiving regular refresher training in this area of practice. All safeguarding issues are promptly referred.

Measures are taken to protect young people from bullying. An anti-bullying policy is established which is conveyed to young people. Bullying is not currently seen as an area of concern, however, staff take action to challenge any incidents with the main focus being placed on its effects.

A system is established for responding to, reporting and recording any event where a young person goes absent without authority. Staff respond appropriately to any absence to ensure their safe return at the earliest opportunity. All relevant parties are informed of any incidents, with comprehensive records now being maintained. However, absence without authority is not currently an area of concern.

Clear routines and expectations are established to assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff use encouragement, reinforcement and positive behaviour incentives and tend to challenge any negative behaviour of young people. The behaviour management of young people is reflected in their individual placement care plans. These provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively manage their behaviour. Sanctions and physical intervention are also used where necessary. Comprehensive records are maintained for these measures of control with the use of physical interventions and sanctions being kept to a minimum. All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention.

The health and safety policy and practice guidelines within the home are robust to ensure that staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. A tour of the premises identified no specific health and safety issues. The various fire safety records are suitably maintained with staff and young people being fully involved in regular fire evacuation procedures.

The authority ensures that robust staff recruitment practices are established for the protection of young people. New staff do not commence employment in the home until all the relevant checks have been carried out.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive the level of care and support based on their individual needs. Needs relating to ethnicity are clearly identified and extremely well met. Although a key worker system is well established, opportunities are readily available for young people to obtain support and discuss issues with any member of staff. Young people are supported by a staff team who are strongly committed to supporting young people to develop and achieve in all aspects of their lives. Various specialist intervention is also provided to meet the specific needs of young people as well as practical advice and support to staff as part of this process.

The education of young people is fully and actively supported and promoted to ensure their educational attainment. Where young people have completed their education, they are supported to engage in further education or seek employment to meet their specific preferences. Positive incentives are established to promote young people's school attendance. Staff maintain close liaison with the young people's educational placements and provide practical support where this is deemed necessary. Staff also attend any activities as part of celebrating young people's successes. Staff also support young people with their private study and suitable facilities are available to assist with this. Personal education plans are established for young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are assessed with detailed individual placement care plans being established. These outline the objectives of the placements, progress achieved and provide staff with guidance on how to meet their needs on a daily basis. Young people's statutory reviews are held at the recommended intervals which also ensure that their placements are suitably monitored. Young people are fully supported and encouraged to attend and contribute to their reviews. All other relevant parties are also invited to attend.

Staff are very committed to supporting young people to maintain the level of agreed contact between them and their families according to their particular circumstances. All contact arrangements, including any restrictions, are clearly identified in young people's individual placement care plans. Staff assist with any transport and supervised contact arrangements where it is deemed necessary. Appropriate arrangements are in place for young people to make and receive telephone calls, as well as to meet all visitors, in private. Young people's social workers are kept regularly informed of the care and well-being of young people.

The home operates a culture of consultation, with young people being encouraged to contribute to and influence the way the home is run. Various forums are established such as regular young people's house meetings and individual key sessions. These enable young people to raise and discuss any issues of concern. Young people are also encouraged to make decisions on a day-to-day basis.

Young people live in a supportive environment where positive relationships were observed between the staff and young people. A friendly and relaxed atmosphere has been created where young people are supported to express their views about any issues. Young people's comments varied about their experience of living at the home and the care and support provided by the staff, with some being extremely positive and others less so. However, staff were observed to carry out their duties in a caring manner with young people who were relaxed and at ease in their company.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home's design and location are suitable for its stated function. Young people live in a warm, homely, welcoming and caring environment. The home is maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. It is also well furnished and decorated. Young people are provided with a good level of communal space to meet their individual and collective needs.

Young people are provided with their own bedrooms which are personalised to their individual tastes. Locks are fitted to their bedroom doors as well as to the communal bath, shower and toilet facilities to promote young people's privacy and dignity.

There are alarms fitted to young people's bedroom doors which are activated when there are child protection issues. Good bathing and toilet facilities are provided together with suitable laundry facilities to meet the needs of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Equality and diversity are promoted very effectively in all aspects of the service. The service consistently identifies and positively meets young people's individual needs relating to their cultural background.

A clear Statement of Purpose is established which describes the level of service provided to young people. Copies of this document are readily available on request to all interested parties. A young people's guide is also produced which provides young people with information they need to know about the home.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are themselves properly managed and supported in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of young people. Daily handover meetings and regular staff meetings are well established. These ensure that staff are kept up to date with regard to any issues relating to the home and young people. In addition, staff receive formal and individual staff supervision which monitors their ongoing development and performance.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are trained and competent to meet their needs. New staff are provided with an induction programme. Ninety two per cent of the staff team have achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. Staff are also fully supported and encouraged to increase their knowledge and expertise through attendance at appropriate training. This includes both mandatory and more specialist training.

The home is committed to ensuring that there are good staffing levels to meet the individual and collective needs of young people accommodated. There are two members of staff on duty in the mornings and three in the evenings, with two staff sleeping-in each night. The hours worked by the manager are normally additional to these staffing levels. Staff have a variety of experience in the care of young people, with little staff turnover. This ensures that young people receive continuity and consistency from a stable staff team.

The authority ensures that the care and welfare of the young people are continually monitored with monthly unannounced visits being undertaken by the authority. Reports are produced outlining these visits and any action needed to improve the outcomes for young people.

The home continues to be managed by a Registered Manager who is suitably qualified and experienced. The manager is supported by three assistant unit

managers, which enables them to effectively monitor the day-to-day care provided to young people. The Registered Manager demonstrates clear and effective leadership which ensures that young people receive stability of care.