

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

The children's home is one of several provided by a county council. The home is a detached house and is on a housing estate in the suburbs of a city. Ofsted registered the home to provide care and accommodation for up to five young people, aged between 12 and 17 years, whose main need for being looked after is due to emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The ground floor has a lounge with satellite television, a dining room, an activities room with a computer and a separate kitchen. There is also a staff sleep-in room and another bedroom. The first floor is made up of a second sleep-in room and other bedrooms and bathroom facilities. There is an enclosed garden at the rear of the property.

At the time of the inspection, five young people were living in the children's home.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

At this full unannounced inspection all the key national minimum standards were inspected. The inspection also looked at the progress the service has made with the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to: staff training; the home's Statement of Purpose; the arrangements for promoting the health of young people; protecting them from bullying and keeping them safe. The five young people currently living at the home were present during the inspection

There was evidence of positive relationships between the staff and young people. There are satisfactory arrangements for protecting and promoting the health of the young people. However, young people's health care plans do not always clearly identify their health needs and some staff have not kept their training in first aid and food hygiene up to date. The home provides a safe setting for the young people but some staff have not updated their fire training and there are shortfalls in some of the home's records.

Staff are good at consulting the young people and involving them in decisions about their stay at the home. Staff are good at supporting and facilitating the education and achievement of the young people. Staffing levels provide appropriate opportunities for staff to carry out one-to-one work with the young people to help meet their assessed needs. The individual needs of young people are recognised and there are plans in place to address them. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected. There are arrangements in place for the internal monitoring of the care and welfare of the young people but these are not

sufficiently robust. The accommodation is homely and overall the standard of decoration, furnishing and maintenance is satisfactory.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection the registered person was asked to ensure that: the Registered Manager undertakes appropriate training; young people's health is protected and promoted; the home's Statement of Purpose includes all the required information; staff protect young people from bullying and that risk assessments for young people are comprehensive. These requirements and recommendations have been addressed and this should help make sure young people's welfare is promoted. The registered person was also asked to ensure that young people's health care plans cover all the recommended areas. This recommendation has not been met and is repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff promote young people's health and well-being. They monitor the health of the young people and each young person has a health care plan. However, these plans do not clearly identify all the health needs of each young person. Because of this, staff may not take appropriate action to meet their needs. Staff do have a good understanding of a range of health care needs and some have received more specialised training. Young people have good access to sources of advice and support on health and personal care issues. One young person said staff 'always ask us how we are and if we have any problems we want to discuss.'

Staff encourage the young people to eat healthy meals and they give them appropriate choices regarding the food they eat. They are aware of the different dietary preferences of the young people. Staff encourage and support young people to help with food shopping and the planning and preparing meals. A young person said, 'I am always in the kitchen making cakes and stuff with other young people.' Another young person said that the staff are 'brilliant cooks.' However, some of the staff who are involved in preparing meals do not have appropriate training in food hygiene.

The arrangements for storing, administering and monitoring the young people's medication are satisfactory. All the staff have had training in safety with medicines and they keep suitable records of young people's medicines which helps protect their health and meet their health care needs. However, some staff have not kept their training in first aid up to date. This means that there is not always a member of staff on duty who is appropriately trained in first aid should any young person have an accident.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff promote young people's privacy and the young people all have their own bedrooms to which they have appropriate access. Doors to the bathrooms and toilets have appropriate locks. Staff ensure information about young people is handled confidentially and stored securely.

There are clear procedures for managing complaints appropriately and ensuring young people are listened to. Staff make sure the young people are aware of who they can go to if they have any complaints. However, staff do not always keep appropriate records of complaints received by the home. This makes it more difficult to check the satisfactory operation of the complaints procedure and whether the home takes appropriate action to address each complaint or concern.

The home has appropriate procedures for safeguarding young people from abuse. There are suitable arrangements for making sure that staff receive child protection training. This helps staff protect young people from abuse and ensures they respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

Staff try hard to protect young people from bullying. The young people said when bullying happens staff help sort it out. One young person said that staff 'are very good, they can always calm us down.' Staff have completed a bullying risk assessment and the home has a clear anti-bullying policy. However, staff do not always follow this policy and keep an appropriate record of incidents involving bullying behaviour. This makes it more difficult to monitor how effective the home's policy is in practice and whether staff have responded to bullying effectively.

Staff take appropriate action when young people go missing or are absent from the home without permission. There are suitable policies and procedures to help make sure this happens. The Registered Manager actively monitors all such incidents.

Staff encourage and support the young people to develop and maintain socially acceptable behaviour. All of the staff have had training in positive behaviour management and how to deal with unacceptable behaviour by focussing on any harmful consequences and how to repair them. Staff use physical restraint on young people very sparingly but on one occasion they did not keep a satisfactory record of the incident. The record does not demonstrate clearly that staff had been following the home's policy regarding the circumstances in which physical restraint can be used. When staff use sanctions these are relevant but the records do not always demonstrate they are reasonable and proportionate. For example, young people may be placed on 'supervised spending' but the records do not always say for how long. Also, staff are not keeping a record of the effectiveness and consequences of any sanctions. Staff do make sure they respond positively to acceptable behaviour by providing appropriate incentives and rewards.

The systems in place to keep the young people and adults safe from the risk of fire

and other potential hazards are satisfactory. Staff carry out a range of risk assessments, including individual risk assessments for each young person. They also carry out regular checks of equipment such as fire alarms and fire doors. However, the home's fire alarms have not received maintenance checks from an engineer at the appropriate frequency. Also, some staff have not kept their fire training up to date and because of this, they may not take appropriate action to safeguard young people if there is a fire.

The council takes appropriate action to help make sure the home only employs suitable people. It carries out a range of checks on new staff before they start working at the home. There are suitable arrangements for monitoring and managing visitors to the home. These help ensure they do not have inappropriate access to young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staffing levels provide good opportunities for staff to give the young people support and assistance to meet their individual needs and wishes. For example, each young person has regular one-to-one time with their key worker and they have risk assessments based on their individually assessed needs. All of the young people said there are people in the home they can talk to if they are unhappy and that staff help them to learn about how to keep safe. One young person said, 'staff give us talks (about this) all the time.'

The home values educational achievement. Staff are good at supporting and encouraging young people's education and achievement. They have good links with each young person's educational placement and support young people to access opportunities which meet their needs, wishes and abilities. Young people confirmed that they receive appropriate help from staff with their school work. One said they get 'a lot of help from staff.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from having placement plans that set out how the home will meet their assessed needs. Staff regularly review, evaluate and update these plans.

There are good arrangements for reviewing the care and progress made by the young people. These include holding regular statutory reviews and staff support the young people to contribute to these reviews. Where it is appropriate, staff have regular contact with the young people's parents. They also regularly provide written feedback to young people's social workers and parents informing them of their progress. All the young people confirmed that they are involved in meetings about their progress and plans for their future. One young person said, 'yes, all the time.'

Staff are good at supporting young people to maintain appropriate and constructive contact with their families and friends. Young people's placement plans include a clear record of the current agreed arrangements. Staff facilitate contact where appropriate.

There are clear procedures covering how staff should support young people when they move into and out of the home. For example, staff encourage young people to have introductory visits, including an overnight stay and they provide them with appropriate written information about the home. Staff also encourage young people to bring appropriate personal possessions with them so that they can personalise their rooms.

Staff are good at talking to young people about how the home is run and helping them to make decisions on matters that affect them. It is evident that staff take the views and opinions of the young people seriously and where possible and appropriate act upon them. Young people confirmed that they are able to have a say about what happens in the home. Staff also actively consult parents about the care of their children and the running of the home. The home has a designated family liaison worker who helps facilitate this process.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff try to make sure young people receive the care and support they need to prepare them for moving on from the home. The daily life of the home provides young people with appropriate opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills they will need in later life.

The accommodation is homely and the standard of decoration and furnishing within the home is generally satisfactory. However, the condition of the paintwork on the ceiling of one of the bathrooms used by young people is poor. Staff ensure the home is kept clean and tidy. Young people have their own bedrooms and they can personalise these if they wish.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a Statement of Purpose that provides clear information about how it operates. There is also a young people's guide that provides a useful introduction to the home as well as important information such as how to complain or contact an independent advocate. The home operates in line with its Statement of Purpose.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs and preferences. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people and try to make sure their needs are being met at all times.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the young people and a stable staff team helps provide continuity and consistency for the young people. The handover arrangements between shifts help ensure there is good communication between staff and the on-call arrangements help make sure staff feel well supported.

The arrangements for providing staff with appropriate training are not fully satisfactory. Although staff say they have good opportunities to attend relevant training and they have access to a rolling programme of core training such as emergency first aid, some staff have not kept this core training up to date. All but one of the care staff have a suitable qualification confirming they have the competencies needed to care for young people. The member of staff who does not is currently undertaking relevant training.

The arrangements in place for monitoring the quality of care provided in the home are not fully satisfactory. The Registered Manager has been monitoring the home's records once a month to identify any issues requiring action. They also complete reports covering what they have monitored and the outcome. However, the monitoring is not sufficiently robust. For example, the Registered Manager has not identified and addressed the shortfalls in the home's records of sanctions and complaints.

Staff make sure that they keep appropriate records of each young person's needs, development and progress.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
26	make adequate arrangements for the maintenance of all fire equipment (Regulation 32(1)(c))	20/10/2010
31	demonstrate that suitable arrangements have been made to ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, in particular training in: safe food handling and hygiene, first aid and fire precautions (Regulation 27(4))	20/10/2010
33	ensure that the arrangements for monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 and improving the quality of care provided in the home are effective. (Regulation 34(1))	06/10/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the health care section of each young person's residential placement plan covers the recommended areas (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that a written record is made and kept of any complaint to include: the person making the complaint, date of the complaint, the nature of the complaint, the action taken and the outcome (NMS 16.3)
- ensure the home's policy on countering bullying and recording incidents of bullying is implemented (NMS 18.3)
- ensure records of the use of restraint on young people are sufficient to demonstrate that staff follow in practice the registered person's policy on the circumstances in which it may be used (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that a record of the use of a sanction includes details of the effectiveness and any consequences of the sanction as well as sufficient information to enable comment on its appropriateness (NMS 22.9 and 22.11)
- ensure all areas of the home used by children are maintained in a good state of decorative repair. (NMS 24.3)