

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
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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 provides care and support for four young people of either sex between the ages of 11 and 17 years. Young people are accommodated in single bedrooms on the upper floor and there are three communal rooms and office accommodation downstairs. The home is a detached property located close to public transport and local amenities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this announced inspection, the full key standards were inspected. The main purpose of this inspection was to find out how well the home meets the needs of the young people who live there.

Young people are cared for by staff who are child-centred and well managed. They know how to care for young people, keep them safe and promote good outcomes. An outstanding judgement with respect to the placement planning that the home performs is acknowledged. This demonstrates individualised support and care that reflect young people's assessed needs that is put together exceptionally well. Staff are well retained, experienced and are all child care trained. This means that they have the knowledge, skills and experience to care for young people who present different challenges.

The shortfalls from this inspection include: sanctions are not all recorded in a bound book, which means that information about sanctions is not securely maintained. A number of Regulation 33 visits have been undertaken by the home's manager. This does not provide a robust, transparent and independent monitoring system. An item of furniture in one of the bedrooms is damaged; the fire risk assessment is out of date and verification of the completed tests on gas appliances were not on the premises. These shortfalls undermine the otherwise safe practices delivered by the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

There was no outstanding actions and recommendations made from the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from a variety of meals that are healthy, nutritious and provided in suitable quantities. Staff involve young people in planning menus and their dietary and cultural needs are considered. Young people are encouraged to prepare some meals, snacks and drinks. This promotes their independence and provides them with skills for the future. Fresh fruit is freely available. Suitable dining facilities are available for young people to use, presenting a social environment for them to engage in.

Young people's physical, emotional health needs are identified and services are provided to promote their good health. Young people are registered with medical professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and optician. Specialist support is available and these are detailed in young people's health plans. This include positive interventions from the children and adolescent mental health team, drug, alcohol and sexual health services. The home is well supported by the looked after children nurse who undertakes health needs assessments and will visit young people at the home to do this. The level of engagement with these services varies from each young person and most are making good progress. Young people are advised and encouraged to develop good hygiene standards and develop healthy lifestyles.

Medication is stored in a secure environment. The systems for the safe administration of prescribed and non-prescribed medication is good. Staff are trained in medication administration and first aid. This means that staff understand the relevant procedures and can offer young people appropriate care and treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected. Young people do not share rooms and they have their own key. This means that they have personal space and keep their belongings safe. Room searches are carried out by staff when there are safety and welfare concerns. This complies with the guidance and helps to keep young people safe. Young people can make phone calls in private and most have a mobile phone. Information about young people is maintained in a secure environment. Staff are trained to ensure the protection and safe handling of young people's information.

Young people know how to complain and they have access to the complaints procedure and advocacy services. No complaints have been made since the last inspection. Young people are encouraged to express any 'grumbles' which are dealt with before they reach a formal complaint stage. Staff are trained in safeguarding. This means that they know what action to take and follow clear protocols to keep young people safe. There have been no safeguarding incidents notified to Ofsted since the last inspection. Staff actively promote an environment where bullying

behaviour is not acceptable. Young people sign up to the anti-bullying agreement so that they understand the homes values and principles and any incidents of bullying is dealt with and monitored. Young people who go missing from home without authority are reported in line with agreed protocols. Young people say that staff encourage them to return home in time and there are positive incentives to encourage them to do this. These measures contribute to the protection of young people from harm.

Young people's behaviour is well managed and clear and achievable strategies are implemented, including positive incentives to promote socially acceptable behaviour. Staff are trained in an approved method of behaviour management and there is a high emphasis on de-escalation. Individual behaviour management plans identify behaviours and strategies to minimise them. Young people approach staff with ease and confidence and positive relationships are developed. On restraint has been recorded since the last inspection. This was a minute long and undertaken to separate two young people and avoid injury. Sanctions seen are fair, include young people's comments and are regularly monitored. However, some of the records are not maintained in a bound book, which although appropriately completed, does not ensure a robust safeguarding system with a clear audit trail.

Young people are supported to be aware of health and safety practices in the home. This includes their inclusion in fire drills when they move in. Tests are carried out on a regular basis on all fire prevention systems and equipment. However, the fire risk assessment is out of date and confirmation that tests on gas appliances have been completed was not available for inspection. Young people's individual risk assessments indicate the level of risk to their health and safety and show how they will be reduced to an acceptable level.

The recruitment system ensures safe recruitment and vetting of staff. No new staff have been recruited to the home since the last inspection. Visitors are appropriately checked and monitored around the home. These measures ensure that young people are protected from unsuitable people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from individual support that meet their assessed needs. Each young person is cared for by the staff team and they have good key work support. Key workers forge positive relationships with young people and encourage key work sessions, attend reviews and meetings and report on their progress and update care plans. Placement plans clearly identify the additional support services, such as social, health, education, advocacy and young offending services. Good communication is forged between the home and other services. These positive interventions help young people to make sense of their lives and get support from the appropriate services when they need it.

Young people's education is actively supported and promoted. Young people are

encouraged to have full access to learning suitable to their needs and staff work closely and relentlessly with education establishments and have access to the virtual head to ensure that young people have opportunities to aspire. Staff act as positive advocates for young people and make every effort to ensure that young people who refuse to attend an education provision are not left unsupported. Young people have access to appropriate study facilities and computer equipment to help them with their coursework. Personal education plans and education information ensure staff are aware about young people's attainment levels and progress.

Young people are encouraged to be involved in activities they enjoy. Most of the young people engage in activities within their own peer group as well as activities facilitated by the home. Examples include cinema, DVD, meals out, shopping, computer games, day trips and holidays. This means that young people can participate in community and social activities and avoid isolation.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are appropriately placed at the home. Statutory information provided by the placing authority enables the manager to assess if they can meet young people's needs, consider the existing group of young people and plan introductions as appropriate. Sometimes information is not forthcoming and staff actively pursue this information and ensure a record of these requests are maintained and monitored. The information is extremely well managed and contributes to the development of comprehensive placement plans, known as 'fitting it all together'. This is an excellent child-centred, outcome based, stand alone, interactive document that when used properly, helps staff to meet young people's individual needs and ensure all support mechanisms are implemented and reviewed. The outcomes of care provided to young people is reviewed through the statutory review process. Young people are invited to attend and contribute to their meetings with staff support. Decisions following these meetings are made in consultation with young people, staff, parents if appropriate and other professionals.

Contact arrangements for each young person is well planned and followed in practice. Permitted and restricted contact is clearly recorded and staff support to young people when having contact with family and significant others. Friends can visit young people at the home. This enables young people to keep in contact with people who are important to them.

Young people are actively encouraged to express their views about the way the home is run and make decisions about their lives. Young people's meetings, key work sessions and informal discussions enable young people to make their views known. Young people are consulted about shopping, food, personalising their rooms and have a say in where they want to live. The involvement of the children's rights worker provides an additional means of consultation. Young people's views are listened to and valued.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are very well supported to develop independent skills. Staff assess young people's practical skills and facilitate opportunities that will benefit them in the future. Young people are encouraged to budget, wash their own clothes, prepare meals and snacks. The home has developed a plan for each young person, irrespective of their age that identifies the support and guidance needed to help them make the transition into adulthood.

The home environment is furnished and decorated to a good standard. It provides good domestic facilities that meet young people's accommodation needs. The kitchen is well equipped and is accessible to young people. Bathrooms are clean and have locking devices that allow staff to enter in an emergency. Most young people's rooms are personalised to suit their individual tastes. One of the rooms contains damaged drawers. This issue has been brought to the manager's attention.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's individual needs are well met, which is evidenced in all outcomes areas and reflected in the stability of placements. Young people are involved in decision-making about their future lives and are fully integrated into the community. Staff are trained in equality and diversity issues and this is a standing agenda item in team meetings. This helps to raise staff members levels of awareness and inform their practice. This is extended to young people who are invited to engage in culture nights, celebrate festivals and religious observance and have a respect for difference in the wider society. Equality and diversity activities are regularly monitored and demonstrates the home's progress with respect to promoting this important area.

The Statement of Purpose sets out the services that young people can expect to receive. It has been reviewed to reflect the changes in the staff team. The children's guide explains what it is like to live in the home. This means that that interested parties and young people can access information that informs them about the service the home has to offer.

Young people are cared for by a sufficient number of competent and experienced staff who are appropriately supervised and managed. All staff have attained a childcare qualification which exceeds the minimum ratio of 80%. This is commendable. Mandatory training is also provided and staff attend refresher training when required. Staff are well retained and are supportive of each other. Supervision takes place monthly and team meetings are convened every two weeks. This means that young people are cared for by staff who are clear about their roles and responsibilities and know how to care for them.

The system in place to monitor the homes performance, both internally and externally is not robust. The external visits have been undermined on three occasions when the Regulation 33 visits were completed by the home's manager. This was agreed following the absence of the usual visitor to the home. The reports following the visits are impartial and minimal in detail, however the process creates a conflict of interest because there is no level of independence and transparency. It is also not clear who takes responsibility to take action on identified areas of improvement. Monitoring of the home's records are undertaken and contain salient points.

Young people's files are well maintained. They provide a clear account of their needs, development and progress during their stay at the home.

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
22	ensure the sanction record complies with the national minimum standards and regulations (Regulation 17(4))	30/11/2010
33	ensure Regulation 33 visits are undertaken by an employee of the organisation who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the home (Regulation 33)	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- maintain copies of gas installations certificates in the home (NMS 26.4)
- implement an up-to-date fire risk assessment (NMS 26.2)
- take action to replace the damaged furniture in the bedroom (NMS 24.3)