

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 run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to four young people aged from 11 to 17 years old, of either gender. The accommodation consists of four single bedrooms, two staff sleeping-in rooms and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing.

The home is situated in a residential area and is close to public transport routes. One of the main aims of the setting is to give young people the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

At this unannounced full inspection, all national minimum standards were inspected to establish how well the home meets the needs of the young people who live there.

There has been no Registered Manager appointed to the home since November 2009. A manager was in position as an interim measure and contributed to the last two inspections. Since this time there has been another manager in charge of the day-to-day proceedings. More recently, a new manager has been appointed. The manager is keen to improve services to young people and has expectations of the staff team to practice to the same standards. An application to register the manager with Ofsted is yet to be received. It is imperative that a Registered Manager is appointed. This will ensure effective leadership of the home's staff and operation and ensure that the home is organised, managed and staffed in a manner that delivers the best possible childcare.

There are a number of strengths identified. Young people are cared for by a competent, experienced and diverse staff team who essentially can meet their needs and keep them safe. Young people are provided with good staff support and services that help promote their safety, welfare and future aspirations. They have good opportunities to enjoy a range of activities and have contact with their family and friends. Staff help young people to develop positive and respectful relationships. This has been a challenge at times when young people have presented with difficult behaviours. The service's promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Areas identified during this inspection for improvement include medication training for more staff, placement and behaviour management plans; behaviour management techniques that do not force compliance and a review of risk assessments that sufficiently detail all young people's risky behaviours. Additionally, there is no clear rationale for placements made at the home and the quality of care is not robustly

monitored. The outcomes for young people are compromised when these shortfalls are not addressed. These are therefore subject to actions and good practice recommendations.

Improvements since the last inspection

Four good practice recommendations were made at the last inspection. These were with respect to implementing the fire risk assessment, pathway plans and monitoring meals that young people consume. In addition, the provider was asked to include details of the responsible individual in the Statement of Purpose. These issues, with the exception of the updated fire risk assessment has been satisfactorily resolved. The outstanding good practice recommendation is reiterated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are actively encouraged to eat healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Staff consult with young people about their preferences and food allergies. These are taken into account when menus are developed. Staff speak to young people about the benefits of healthy eating. Some young people choose not to follow this guidance and others do. Staff record the actual meals that young people consumed so that their eating habits can be monitored. Young people can prepare their own meals, drinks and snacks that promotes their independence skills. Fresh fruit is freely available for the young people. Suitable dining areas are available for young people and staff to dine together.

Young people's health needs are met and there are sound systems to safeguard them when providing care and treatment. Health information is made available and informs staff about young people's health histories and current status. Young people are registered with health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and optician. Specialist support is available to meet young people's psychological and emotional health needs. Good support is available from the looked after children (LAC) nurse, who undertakes health needs assessments. Young people are supported to attend health appointments or, if competent, may choose to go alone. The outcome of appointments are recorded. Young people are encouraged to develop good hygiene skills and smoking is discouraged. Staff liaise effectively with drugs, alcohol and sexual health agencies. Professionals from these services visit young people and are available to offer them information and advice. Medication is safely stored. Most of staff are trained in first aid. However, an insufficient number of staff are trained in the administration of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected and their information is confidentially handled. Young people do not share rooms and they are provided with their own room key.

This means that they can take responsibility for the safety of their possessions. Staff talk to young people on a regular basis about respecting each other's space and there are agreements about young people going into each other's rooms. Young people are able to use a phone in private.

Young people are informed about the complaints procedure and know how to use it. Compliments have been received. These demonstrate good practices that have resulted in positive outcomes for young people. Young people are encouraged to make any 'grumbles' known. These are taken seriously and allow issues to be resolved in consultation with young people before they reach a formal complaint. Young people have access to the children's rights service. Workers from the service support young people and act as advocates on a range of issues, such as bullying behaviour. Bullying is well managed when it is an issue. The children's rights service is integral to this process and staff, trained in safeguarding, co-operate to ensure the safety of young people. Clear reporting procedures are followed, all the relevant safeguarding agencies are notified and medical advice and consultation is sought. All young people report that they are not currently being bullied. Allegations made by young people are dealt with through the appropriate safeguarding procedures. Staff act on information shared with them and strategies are put in place to keep young people safe. These measures are good. They demonstrate the priority given to safeguarding young people to protect them from harm, even when they do not meet the threshold for child protection. This is performed by staff who know what to do in the event of a safeguarding concern.

Young people who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with the agreed protocols. Absconding plans are implemented and young people have opportunities to discuss their reasons for going missing. Young people are supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour. All staff are trained in an approved behaviour management theory and practice. There is a clear emphasis on promoting positive incentives to motivate young people to behave well. Some of the young people's behaviour until recently has been difficult and has presented challenges to the staff team. Comments made from some young people about staff indicates a negative perception of them. Staff continue to persevere and communicate with young people to make positive changes and reinstate the boundaries. Sanctions seen match the presenting behaviours and these are monitored. However, not all of the fundamental practices are in place to support consistent behaviour management practices. For example, behaviour management plans have generic headings so they may not identify all of the young people's presenting behaviours. There have been at least four occasions when behaviour management techniques have been used to force compliance despite periods of de-escalation. This is not good practice. Young people have entered the office and have refused to leave when staff have asked them to. There is no evidence that these behaviours meet the threshold for physical intervention. Measures used to force compliance lead to a counter-productive outcome. These issues have not been identified during the management monitoring of restraints.

Young people's physical safety and security is compromised by shortfalls in risk management strategies and practice. Fire safety systems are regularly checked to

ensure they function properly and young people are encouraged to evacuate the building. This has not always been successful and staff record when young people have refused to leave the premises. However, the risk of this happening and agreed strategies is not included in individual and health and safety risk assessments. The fire risk assessment was last updated in 2005. It does not reflect the works completed that make the home compliant with fire regulations.

The recruitment system ensures safe recruitment and vetting of staff. New staff at the home have come through internal appointments and their enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosures are verified by the manager. Visitors are appropriately checked and monitored. These measures ensure that young people are protected from people who may pose a risk to them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive individual support when they need it. Young people's assessed needs are known to staff and they are encouraged to engage with services provided to meet them. This includes the staff team, key workers, social workers, health, education and youth justice services. Drugs, alcohol and sexual health teams also provide services to young people who need advice and support. Staff work in partnership with these agencies to help support young people's development and promote good outcomes for them.

Education is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of the preparation for adulthood. All young people have an education provision that they are actively encouraged to attend. Staff understand the value of a good education, give it a high priority and encourage young people to attend and progress in their subject areas. Positive incentives are provided to encourage school attendance, although some young people are stronger attendees than others. Staff talk to young people about the consequences of non-attendance and the impact they may have on their future careers. Staff communicate well with schools and will attend parent and other educational meetings. Personal education plans and statements of educational needs are in place; young people are consulted and involved. Facilities are available in the home for young people to do their homework. Staff offer to help young people with their revision and provide support.

Young people are supported and encouraged by staff to pursue their particular interests and develop leisure activities. These include events such as playing video games, baking, watching DVDs, ice skating, going to the cinema, parties to celebrate specific events and day trips. Friendships with young people in the community are encouraged and they are invited to visit the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs assessed and information provided helps staff care for young people. Placement planning meetings are held with staff to ensure that young people's needs can be met. However, it is not clear how when placements are made, the effects of the admission upon the existing group of young people are taken into account and recorded. Young people's written placement plans are in place and they are encouraged to participate in their development. However, not all placement plans include all young people's information. However, practice would suggest that young people's assessed needs are acted on. Young people's needs and development are regularly reviewed. Staff record young people's progress and report this information at statutory reviews. Young people are invited to contribute to the reports. Some choose not to and will attend their review and contribute to them in person.

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and significant others. Agreed and restricted contacts are clearly recorded. Staff encourage young people to continue to develop positive relationships with their families and friends. This is good because it promotes young people's sense of identity. Appropriate friends and family are encouraged to visit young people at the home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. Young people each have key workers and they are encouraged to spend individual time with them. The sessions enable young people talk about their future plans. Young people's meetings regularly take place. Staff encourage young people to contribute to the agenda and record the minutes. The meetings mean that young people can participate in decision-making about aspects of their care, such as decorating their bedrooms, menus, activities, have respect for each other. Young people also discuss equality and diversity issues and what it means for them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps to prepare them for and support them into adulthood and live independently. Young people's practical skills are assessed by staff using resources developed by the service. This identifies the support and guidance that young people need to develop independence skills. Young people are engaged in this process irrespective of their age and ability. Young people are encouraged to get involved in independent skills, such as learning to budget, clean their rooms, preparing meals and snacks and travelling alone on public transport. The home has made contact with social workers to request pathway plans. This is a proactive measure. It means that the action taken to obtain the plans ensure that young people are not disadvantaged by delays in obtaining the support they need.

Overall, the home environment is suitably furnished and decorated. Strong features are noted in the lounge areas, kitchen and bathrooms. These are well equipped and there is in-house entertainment and comfortable seating. New carpets have been laid in the hallway and stairs, which provide a comfortable and warm environment. Picture and ornaments provide homely touches. Young people's rooms are personalised to suit their individual preferences. They are adequately equipped and furnished. Aspects of the home are subject to ongoing improvements.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home's Statement of Purpose was reviewed in October 2010. It updates the management and staffing arrangements. A young people's guide is available. The documents inform social workers, parents and young people about the services young people can expect to receive. Young people's case files are well ordered and maintained and their needs, development and progress are recorded. Young people can have access to information about them.

The home's promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's needs can be met by the current staff team. The staff team reflect a good balance of positive role models from different races, genders and age groups. They are also helped to have a healthy respect for difference and diversity issues are a permanent feature, discussed at young people's meetings. Young people are supported to develop an awareness of their rights and responsibilities and integrate fully into the community. Young people have opportunities to thrive and develop positively as individuals.

Young people are cared for by a sufficient number of staff who are experienced, competent and supervised to care for them. A high number of staff are qualified to the National Vocational Qualification at level 3. This is good because it demonstrates that young people are cared for by people who understand their needs. Staff are provided with training opportunities and updates, such as safeguarding so their practice is up to date. There are suitable deputising arrangements in the managers absence and staff sickness and annual leave is covered by existing or casual staff that the young people know. This ensures continuity of care.

There have been some changes in recent months to the homes management and staffing arrangements. It is not clear what the impact of this has been on the lives of the young people. The manager is qualified and experienced. They have made a good start to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the service and show a healthy enthusiasm to driving improvements, despite the challenges. The manager is keen to involve staff in developing good practices. This means that potentially the outcomes for young people will be improved.

The quality of care is regularly monitored by the manager and Regulation 33 visitor. However, the monitoring process has not identified or addressed the issues raised at this inspection with respect to placement plans, behaviour management issues,

health and safety matters and medication training. There is no clear overview of the trends and patterns that can be used from the home's records to further safeguard young people and promote the quality of care in 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 that no measure of control is used to force compliance (Regulation 17(1))	30/11/2010
2	ensure that there is an up-to-date placement plan for each young person accommodated at the home (Regulation 12)	30/11/2010
32	ensure robust monitoring of all care practices within the home to improve the quality of care (Regulation 33 and 34).	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- implement the fire risk assessment on completion of outstanding work (NMS 26.8)
- make available sufficient staff who are trained to administer medication to young people (NMS 13.1)
- review behaviour management plans to ensure they accurately meet young people's behavioural needs (NMS 22.16)
- monitor the record books to monitor compliance with the home's policy, procedure and guidance and to identify any patterns in incidents leading to disciplinary or restraint action becoming necessary. Ensure the monitoring addresses the implications for the care of individual young people and current care practice (NMS 22.11)
- update and keep under review young people's individual risk assessments and health and safety risk assessments to ensure they accurately reflect the current risks posed (NMS 26.2)
- make sure that the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of young people, are taken into account, and recorded, in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- complete the planned programme of refurbishment to ensure that the home is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair (NMS 24.3).

