

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

This children's home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people aged between 12 and 17-years-old.

The house is detached and is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a town. It is within easy reach of schools, shopping and leisure facilities. There are two communal lounges, a dining room and large kitchen on the ground floor. Young people have individual bedrooms and share bathrooms. There are separate staff bedrooms and bathroom facilities. The house has an enclosed garden to the rear and a smaller garden to the front.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection during which the key standards for each Every Child Matters outcome were looked at.

Particular strengths of the home include the support to young people to achieve standards of socially acceptable behaviour. An experienced staff team use diffusion and diversion extremely well to maintain balanced conduct from young people. Young people show an investment in the home and contribute to its day-to-day running. The assistance young people receive to prepare them for adult life is excellent and support continues even when they have left.

Managers and staff at the home recognise areas for development and address these thoroughly, always looking to improve on their already outstanding practice.

An area for development is the content of some of the recording in the daily log held.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in January 2010, one action and three recommendations were made. All of these have been fully addressed.

Management of the home were required to ensure that they notified without delay the relevant agencies of any occurrences set out in Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations. Since the last inspection notifications have been made as required and a check list is now in place as part of incident recordings to ensure this occurs. This means that the home's management are fulfilling their requirements under the regulations.

Consideration of improving the home's policy and systems relating to searches of a young person's bedroom was also recommended. An amended policy is now in place which covers such searches and a separate log is held of any which occur. This helps to ensure young people's privacy is safeguarded. A further recommendation was made that the children's guide to the home was provided in forms which are appropriate to the understanding of the young people in the home. The guide has now been translated into a range of languages and the particular one required following an admission to the home can be accessed within a short time scale. This means that all young people admitted can be made aware of the rules and responsibilities as well as their rights whilst at the home.

A further recommendation was made that at least 80% of the care staff were qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 or equivalent in Caring for Children and Young People. Additional staff have now completed this qualification and all others are currently undertaking it. Currently 84% of the staff team are qualified. This means that staff have increased their knowledge of how to care for young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health care of young people is fully addressed at the home. Needs are comprehensively identified as part of the initial assessment and this information is used to compile an individual health care plan. Physical and emotional health needs are met by a proactive staff team who ensure appointments to see doctors, opticians and dentists are known and attended by the young people. Mental health provision is available from an external specialist team who are also able to support staff in their work. Regular joint meetings are held with this team to ensure consistency of approach.

Medication is well managed and staff understand the need to ensure storage, recording and administration is undertaken competently. Whilst there is little medication held, it is administered safely and appropriately with robust records in place. Procedures for staff guidance and training is in place. A self medication policy is available and lockable storage boxes in place should a young person be risk assessed as competent to hold their own medicines. This enhances the work carried out in the home to prepare young people for adult life.

There are weekly menus available which young people are able to contribute to. Any dietary needs are able to be identified and fully met, including the purchase of individual foods and the provision of external support to ensure culturally diverse meals are available. Food provided is healthy and the menus are nutritionally balanced. Staff cook all meals, often with assistance from young people and offer support to those who buy and prepare their own food as part of an independence package.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy and dignity is respected. All bathrooms and toilets are fitted with appropriate locks and each young person has a key for their bedroom. Staff members announce their arrival prior to entering a young person's room. All written information is held securely in a locked cabinet within a lockable office. Staff are aware of the sensitive and confidential nature of information and know with whom it can be shared.

There is an effective complaints system in place which young people know how to access. Information and complaints forms are available without the need to request these from staff. However, staff are extremely competent at solving any issues which young people raise, negating the need for them to make a formal complaint and there have been none since the last inspection. A record is made of where a concern has been made known and was dealt with immediately by staff. An independent advocate visits the home every two months. She holds a meeting with all the young people which staff do not attend. Young people are able to raise any concerns they may have at this meeting or can contact the advocate by telephone.

Young people are protected from abuse by the safeguarding systems in operation. Staff are trained in child protection and have undertaken sexual exploitation and domestic violence courses. Robust policies and procedures are in place and there are positive links with local child protection services. The Local Safeguarding Children Board's procedures are also available in the home. Staff are competent at talking to young people about how they could place themselves in danger. The practice and guidance in place ensures that young people have their welfare promoted. Young people are protected from bullying effectively. Individual bullying risk assessments are in place and any suspicion of an incidence of bullying is addressed immediately by staff.

The approach to young people who are absent without authority from the home is excellent. There are very good defined protocols in place which have been devised in conjunction with the police, which clearly define when a young person should be reported as missing. Individual risk assessments are in place which detail the possible risks to each young person when away from the home. Young people are encouraged to keep in contact with the home if they are delayed or are not returning as planned. Excellent support and advocacy was given, including liaison with the police when some of the young people complained about verbal abuse they had received locally.

All significant events are notified as required by regulation. Strong procedures are in place which include a checklist to ensure all relevant authorities are notified.

Young people are encouraged to display appropriate behaviour. Each young person has a behavioural management plan which they are able to contribute to which details the best strategies for an individual. An incentive scheme is in place which

rewards positive behaviour, including required school attendance. Individual rewards are also available such as time out with a key worker to undertake an activity. There are some outstanding appropriate professional relationships in place with young people and staff act as good role models. Diversion and diffusion techniques are utilised fully as part of the strategies in place and staff spend a great deal of time talking with young people. Physical intervention is rarely used and no restraint has occurred in the home for over two years. Expectations of behaviour are made known and staff continue to challenge any unacceptable conduct. There is minimal use of sanctions and on many occasions reparation will be undertaken instead. All behaviour management records are comprehensively completed and are subject to internal and external monitoring.

Procedures for the recruitment and vetting of staff which is undertaken by the local authority are in place. Recruitment records were not viewed on this visit and there have been no new staff employed for the last three years. Where additional staff support is required, agency staff are not used but a known and vetted small bank is able to be accessed.

Safety systems and procedures are in place to ensure young people's welfare is protected. Fire equipment tests are carried out and full drills are undertaken on a regular basis including following each admission. Service contracts are in place for the maintenance of all gas, fire and electrical equipment and there are comprehensive risk assessments completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The educational attainment of young people is supported extremely well. Arrangements for attendance at school are excellent and there are good links in place which enable staff to ensure they are aware of young people's individual progress. Plans are in place which detail how educational needs will be met and all young people of school age currently attend. Young people are encouraged to talk about their education in a social setting and share individual and cultural experiences. Communications from schools and reports are received by key workers, who also attend open evenings and other meetings as appropriate. Access to appropriately firewalled internet is available for the young people.

Young people are supported and encouraged to take part in leisure activities in the area. They are able to visit facilities such as swimming pools, bowling and gyms. One young person attends a local rugby club. Further activities are enjoyed as part of a group or on an individual basis with a key worker. Trips are arranged for the school holidays including a residential holiday.

Staff at the home work with some young people for whom English is not the first language. They are able to demonstrate an excellent understanding of their individual needs. They encourage the young people to talk about their background,

ensure any cultural needs are addressed and provide appropriate support such as interpreters.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has a comprehensive placement plan which is compiled with their input. This sets out clearly what work is required to achieve identified targets. The plans are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they are as up to date and relevant as can be. Where young people may not have achieved as much as planned, discussions are held with them as to how plans can be adjusted to ensure targets are achievable. Reviews are held as required, young people are involved in these and minutes and outcomes are available.

Young people are able to contribute their views fully about the way the home operates and are consulted on a regular basis. There are resident meetings held where discussions around the menu, activities, decorations and the needs of everyone in the home are held. The responsibilities of living as a group are also discussed and encouragement to understand everyone's needs is further embedded by a group weekly meal out followed by an activity.

Contact with families and friends where appropriate is encouraged. Families are enabled to visit a young person with financial support where required, and their friends are able to call round. Private calls can be made from a telephone in the home as well as from young people's mobiles.

Relationships between young people and staff are outstanding. Expectations of conduct by everyone are well known and there is mutual respect on all sides. The minimal occurrence of negative behaviours bears testimony to the abilities of the staff group to engage with young people effectively.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

There is a wide ranging package of independence experiences available for young people at the home. Three different levels of preparation for adult life are in operation. Those who are nearing the end of their stay in the home undertake the final stage which involves them budgeting, purchasing their own food and making meals. Further support is given regarding training opportunities, finances and ensuring access to medical facilities. Each young person has a plan in place detailing the work to be carried out leading to them leaving the home. Older young people have a separate independence plan, these continue to develop as the needs of each young person change and staff become more experienced in their content. Support continues after a young person has left the home. Key workers call to see them every fortnight, they are encouraged to telephone the home and invited round for meals.

The premises are maintained to a high standard. Decoration and furnishings are of good quality and there is no damage, young people are proud of their home. Cleanliness and hygiene is addressed fully. There is plenty of space for young people to use, including a separate lounge which they can use for a variety of purposes. Young people have a key to their bedroom and are able to contribute towards ideas for decorating and furnishing them. There are no areas of the home which are kept locked thereby denying access to young people.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A Statement of Purpose is available which clearly sets out the aims and objectives of the home. A young person's guide to living at the home is also in place. This can also be made available in differing languages where required, although staff also ensure young people are aware of their rights and responsibilities by discussing the contents with them.

The staff team are well supported and are able to access a wide range of training to assist them in their work. Currently, 84% of the staff now hold a qualification equal to or in excess of an NVQ at level 3. Appropriate staffing levels are in place and the team is a settled one with no new staff member having commenced employment for the last three years. This consistency enables positive relationships to be built with young people and a settled environment to be enjoyed. The experience of the staff team helps to ensure that one-to-one work carried out with young people is effective and appropriate.

Records required to be held are in place and each young person has an individual file which is well constructed, sectioned and regularly audited. Where information is found to be missing, this is requested from the relevant agency and the request recorded. The daily log which is held, does in some entries contain too much individual and possibly confidential information rather than signposting the reader to where that information can be found.

Visits are undertaken on behalf of the local authority by a regulation 33 visitor. A report is completed after each visit and this is made available to the manager and staff at the home. A plan for further development of the work carried out at the home is in place. The manager and staff at the home have been able to identify where they want to develop the work and their achievements further.

The ethos of all at the home is to provide an environment where young people are respected and given responsibility for their own actions. Behaviour displayed by the young people is exemplary and a skilled staff team interact with them expertly.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are addressed as individuals and the diverse range of needs are met fully. A large amount of work is carried out to ensure young people respect each other and understand the needs

of a group. Each young person's contribution to living in the home is valued and consultation undertaken is wide ranging.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure the daily log does not contain additional or confidential information which should be recorded elsewhere. (NMS 35)