

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 accommodation is a short break home for children and young people with a disability. The home is operated by a local authority social services department. Support and care is provided for up to four young people, both genders, from five years old up to 17 years. The house is single storey, detached and adapted to support residents with a disability. Occupational health are consulted when changes to the building or specialist equipment is required.

The home is situated fairly close to a large town centre. It has sufficient space and rooms, where the young people can pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. There is an enclosed garden at the rear of the home. A cinema and parks, as well as sports and athletics facilities are a short walk or journey away. The home has a specially adapted vehicle and is close to bus routes, that connect it with the local community and the national rail link. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This key inspection was unannounced. The report comments on every outcome heading covering all the key children's homes national minimum standards. Progress against recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

This is an outstanding service, providing a consistent response to meeting young people's specific needs. Quality assurance systems demonstrate that the management team are reflecting on practice and continually develop the service in line with new initiatives. A wide range of equality and diversity matters are addressed and a high quality service is being provided. Staff are experienced. The home's Registered Manager provides effective leadership.

A clear strength of this service is shown within the personalised care planning arrangements. Staff practice values individual difference. The diverse needs of 17 young people are well supported at this home by a competent team of staff. Staff have established professional as well as supportive relationships with parents. There is excellent communication and effective consultation. Partnership arrangements with families, social workers and different professionals and agencies who support the children are firmly established.

Support and training ensures staff continue to develop skills and expertise. Staff remain highly motivated. Young people are being looked after safely and have the opportunity to develop skills through the positive experiences they gain. A carefully

coordinated response is taken to meet health needs.

This report highlights one advisory recommendation. The certificate for the home's public and employee liability is not up to date.

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or in the case of the residential redesign, continue to be discussed. Processes used to manage the transition between children's and adults services have been reviewed and are being managed effectively.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

A clear health policy and procedural guidance has been produced. Staff practice follows this guidance. Staff receive training, to ensure that they have the skills to provide first aid, safe handling and administration of medicines. There is a medicines administration recording system suited to young people receiving short breaks. There is continuous reflection on practice and this allows new initiatives to be introduced and these shape future services.

The management team ensure that full health histories are gained as part of the referral and introduction procedures. Most of the young people require a detailed health and personal care response in order for them to enjoy their break at the home. The promotion of the young people's health and well-being is a key priority. Medication is handled safely between home, school and this unit. Some recent work by staff ensured that a specialist piece of equipment was being used correctly in all three of these settings. Some training was provided for a parent. The management of medicines, including controlled drugs and recovery medicines is coordinated very well. Established systems ensure safe medicines handling. The Registered Manager monitors information closely through her statutory responsibilities.

Health plans contain excellent details. Staff are fully familiar with health information and the up to date information allows health support to be coordinated efficiently. Health plans can only be changed following discussion with doctors and parents. No changes can be made to medication, unless written authorisation is provided by the young person's doctor. Parental permissions for emergency treatment and for administering medicines and first aid have been gained. Staff deployment is effective on a day-to-day basis in supporting health needs. Visits to dentists, doctors and opticians are usually coordinated by young people's families or carers, with whom they spend most of their time.

Staff work with parents and carers to provide nutritional and healthy meals. Consultation with parents is efficient and any needs arising out of cultural difference are addressed. The specific dietary requirements for each of the residents are

outlined within the home's records. There are no outstanding recommendations highlighted within environmental health department reports.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Checks carried out on the quality of staff vetting, recruitment and selection confirmed that a robust system is evident throughout the recruitment process. Suitable evidence including enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks, references, application forms and records of the interview are produced. The Registered Manager is supported very well by administration staff resulting in accurate spreadsheets being maintained on all staff employed at the home. A recent recruitment campaign had attracted some experienced and skilled casual staff members. Suitable vetting of visitors to the home is also undertaken, with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Arrangements for complaints and compliments, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. Safeguarding policies are made clear and staff practice is reflective of the procedural guidance within these policies. Bullying guidance is updated in line with new government guidance. No concerns were highlighted throughout the course of this inspection. No notifications had been made to Ofsted between inspection. There have been no complaints between inspections. The home has received many positive comments on the quality of services and high standards of care being provided.

The young people's privacy is respected within the routines operated. Due to the nature of some of the young people's needs, intimate care tasks are required and these are done in an appropriate and respectful manner. Appropriate staff training is provided for young people requiring staff help when moving and handling support is needed. Plans clearly outline the methods and techniques to be used.

No safeguarding concerns have affected the home's operation. Reporting protocols are clear and young people are being looked after safely. The management team and staff have established good partnership arrangements with parents and carers. Consultation and communication is effective. This was confirmed by a visiting parent. Signed agreements underpin all the work undertaken. Safe and transparent practice is demonstrated.

Comprehensive risk assessments are produced to highlight the concerns and vulnerability of the young people. Agreed behaviour management and preferred handling strategies are produced. Staff practice incorporates parental wishes on how their children need to be cared for. The home has a fully trained representative to support positive handling techniques. All staff receive training and have suitable skills to respond to presenting matters.

Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people

and their parents. Staff utilise picture exchange communication systems as well as picture and word association to help young people's comprehension. Staff have received child protection training, in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Policy and procedural guidance established at this home is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols.

A coordinated response is evident to security, health and safety. Servicing schedules and certificates relating to fire precautions, electrical and gas installations and appliance testing are held. No hazards were observed to young people's safety. The public and employee liability insurance certificate is out of date and a new one has been requested from the employer. Occupational health have had input to ensure the home remains fit for purpose. The accommodation layout continues to be reviewed when new referrals are accepted. A central alerting system has been set up to receive communications from the Medical Devices Agency.

A compliance letter from the Fire and Rescue Services confirms the home meets fire regulations. The Registered Manager consults with different professionals and departments on an ongoing basis to ensure the home remains safe. A four point action plan had recently been drafted to support the premises fire risk assessment. Practice fire drills are undertaken and recorded. Parents receive communications on fire safety procedures at the home. Letters outline individual approaches for each young person. This recognises approaches needed by day and by night.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

An initial assessment identifies the programmes of care and support to be followed. Comprehensive arrangements are then outlined within placement plans designed to deliver individualised support. The assessment of need specifies the levels of support required. Plans make it clear that staff can only contribute towards the overall arrangements due to the amount of time that young people actually spend at the home. Some young people only spend a few hours on an infrequent basis, whilst others attend for overnight stays regularly. Parents confirm that they are fully satisfied with the support being provided and agree that the standards of care are very high.

Placement aims and objectives are well recorded. Achievements are celebrated frequently. Plans are up to date and utilise a multidisciplinary response. The areas where the home has responsibility are coordinated efficiently. Parents receive regular reports on young people's progress. Staff have an excellent knowledge and awareness of residents needs. The individual and collective needs of the young people are met well through effective deployment of competent staff. Ongoing communication and consultation, ensures that parents and carers remain satisfied with the day-to-day arrangements in place. Staff are clearly making a difference.

The young people's education is actively supported and promoted. Staff know the educational arrangements in place for each resident. Morning routines support

attendance at respective schools. Communication books enable teaching staff, parents and the home's staff, to provide consistent care in the three different settings young people move between. There is effective liaison with local authorities and teachers from respective schools. There is good continuity in the approaches being used to support needs. Telephone contact is frequent and good practice ideas are being shared.

There is good access to community based recreation utilising a suitably adapted mini-bus. Some additional funding for the summer holiday period was secured and this allowed an action packed holiday programme to be run. The activities enjoyed are captured within a photographic display that takes centre stage within the home. The summer recreation programme was supported by additional casual staff. Similar arrangements will be in place to support future holiday periods. Financial resources are sufficient to enable the young people to take part in an ample range of age and ability appropriate activities. There are also suitable in-house resources being used to stimulate the young peoples interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's management team have established effective systems to manage placement arrangements. Placement planning arrangements are comprehensive. Aims and objectives are clear and these are closely linked to wider placement arrangements, being coordinated by other professionals and departments, working within a defined multi-disciplinary framework. It is clear that staff and the management team make a difference to the quality of the young people's lives.

The religious and cultural needs of the young people are reflected in written plans. These allow young people to be cared for in accordance with parent's wishes. The management team work hard to ensure placements are safe, focused and consistent with other plans.

A detailed assessment of need is produced in consultation with parents. No young person is assumed to be unable to communicate their views. Consultation systems reflect young people's differing communication needs. Many communication techniques are used. Social workers are kept informed of pertinent issues. Many positive comments have been received from parents and young people on the quality of services being provided. There is a panel of parents who can influence service delivery. All matters affecting the children are dealt with sensitively.

Records produced provide a permanent overview of the time that each child is at the home. Referrals are matched to staff's skills and experience. The home's management team ensures compatibility between the needs of young people on different nights, weekends and school holiday periods. Contact arrangements take into consideration the fact that young people spend time between their home address, school and the children's home. Communication channels remain transparent between all three settings.

Referral and introduction procedures are well thought out, to establish a safe environment, for the young people. Risk assessments support the decision making framework, when managing groups of young people. Statutory reviews take place at appropriate intervals. Plans are adjusted when necessary, through discussions during these reviews. Key workers are committed to providing the young people with the best possible support and experience. Good outcomes are being achieved.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The home is situated in a location that takes into account transport, education, health and leisure facilities. Shops and supermarkets are close by, making food shopping easy. The home is a detached bungalow with adequate parking. The staff are maintaining appropriate links with the local community. A charitable organisation continues to provide much needed support, resources and additional finances, to enable young people to experience their short breaks at this home positively.

The home is safe, being decorated and furnished to a good standard. There is good space and resources to meet the needs of the young people. The design and layout of the home manages to retain a homely and comfortable feel. The use of the space and the different rooms is well thought out. Each room is suitably adapted and equipped. Electrical equipment within bedrooms is safe. Staff are fully aware of the support required for individual children's night time routine. Anything identified as a potential hazards to residents safety is removed.

Each young person has their own bedroom. Clear efforts are made to personalise bedrooms and young people often bring cherished items with them. Bathrooms and toilet facilities comply with national minimum standards for children's homes. Specialist equipment supports bathing routines. Suitable levels of privacy is afforded. Bathing and toilet facilities are shared between staff and residents. This situation is not ideal. The home's maintenance response is efficient. Water temperatures are being regulated, to prevent any possibility of scalding. A rolling programme of refurbishment maintains high standards within the home and its gardens. The rear garden area is a particular favourite of the young people.

Transition planning for the time that the young people move from the home to adult services had been reviewed between inspections. Those young people eligible have a plan drafted. These plans make clear the areas where young people can gain important life skills. Programmes operated, routines followed and placement planning are clearly being linked. A skills development and resource folder is evolving. There is greater emphasis from all staff members regarding this aspect of their work. There is a strong commitment to shaping and improving the transition process. Ideas and views are being discussed. Transition plans are being developed through statutory review procedures.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The Registered Manager was absent for much of this inspection. Staff members deputised very well in her absence. Practice is responsive and capable of providing high quality services for young people with a disability. The efficient management of young people's needs has established excellent continuity between life at this children's home, respective schools and the home address.

The Registered Manager has been instrumental in shaping many of the services at this home. Staff members are fully aware of their roles. There is clear and effective communication between all levels of staff. Staff competence, enthusiasm, confidence and commitment was a key feature of this inspection. The collective efforts of everyone at the home richly deserve the overall rating of outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Policy and guidance has been produced. Good training programmes are accessed. Many of the young people have profound disabilities, including communication difficulties. Individualised care planning is characterised by a clear commitment to establishing equality and fairness for everyone receiving a short break at the home. A diverse section of the local community is supported. Parents show their satisfaction in the services being provided.

The home has a lengthy history of being managed efficiently. The Registered Manager is experienced, competent and fully qualified. The employing local authority is providing continuing professional development through access to post qualification training. Practice clearly meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations. The staff team have skills to support the specific needs of the young people. They also possess a vast amount of experience. The competencies and skills staff have continue to grow through access to training. Records show a good clarity of purpose in how staff are being managed. Induction and foundation training is provided. A casual staff member, who combines a professional role within a health setting and working part-time at the home, commented extremely positively on the team approach and the induction training provided. Supervision records are good and these are clearly linked to staff's personal development and appraisal.

Staff deployment is managed very well. The staffing structure has experienced few changes between inspections. The number of staff holding National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 exceeds the desired 80% target. Each shift has a nominated team or shift leader. Rotas demonstrate that staffing levels are being maintained. Staff are clear about their roles, balancing their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people are met whilst ensuring that the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken.

Staff have relevant written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides good information in accordance

with regulations. Aims and objectives as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Records are easy to access within the office area. Staff use the guidance to ensure a consistent response to meeting residents presenting needs.

Quality assurance systems show that the management team are reflecting on the need to continually develop services. The home provides a safe and stable environment. Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Detailed reports are maintained in-house. Reports are also being forwarded to Ofsted. One report was produced following a night time visit. This type of monitoring provides additional safeguards above and beyond what can be reasonably expected.

The home's management team have a team plan outlining how the home's operation will be maintained. There is good use of self-evaluation. This is evident within the detailed information provided to Ofsted in advance of this inspection. The home's Registered Manager is a member of an action group reviewing children with a disability residential services. A decision to close the home for short periods during school holidays was reached following consultation with parents and senior local authority managers.

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):

- replace the out of date public and employee liability insurance certificate. (NMS 26.9)