

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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 operated by a local authority and is registered to care for up to six children and young people of both genders, from the age of 13 years up to 17-years-old. The home was completely refurbished and extended in October 2007.

The home cares for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Services have recently been developed to support young people, in need, who are registered as refugees. The house is detached and situated a few miles from a large town centre. There are sufficient rooms, where the young people can pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. All bedrooms are single occupancy. Some of the large garden at the rear of the home has been taken up with a bedroom extension and conservatory.

The children and young people can gain access to parks, a cinema and sports and athletics facilities. Bus routes connect the home with the local community, places of worship and the national rail link. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

Summary

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

This is a good children's home in virtually every respect. The recent service history shows that the home's management and operation is coordinated safely and the support provided enables residents to achieve and develop their potential. A home's development plan has successfully been implemented. The quality of practice enables young people to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. Young people's needs are consistently being met by a team of staff who are skilled at presenting opportunities and experiences for continuous growth and development.

Residents are settled and on the vast majority of occasions, providing their full cooperation. They remain focused in their placements and gain valuable skills that will be needed when they move on from the home. There is a clear focus on residents' futures. Independence training, pathway and after care planning is being coordinated well.

Quality assurance systems show that the management team are reflecting on practice. This enables the service to be developed in line with inspection report recommendations as well as introducing new initiatives. Staff practice embraces equality and diversity principles throughout the range of services being provided. Good health and educational support is provided. GCSE examinations have been taken by the older residents. College placements have been accessed for those that have completed their compulsory schooling.

The Registered Manager is managing a service that allows young people to experience safe and stable lifestyles. There have been few behavioural management problems, no major safeguarding concerns, no complaints and only one significant incident. Consultation and communication between staff and the young people is good. Respectful relationships have been established.

This report highlights some recommendations to support practice developments. The evidence base to show how staff supervision, personal development and appraisal is organised is not clear. Dates for equality and diversity training are not known. Plans for all staff to receive first aid and medicines management training have not yet been completed. The number of staff holding National Vocational Qualifications(NVQ) at Level 3 is not yet at the desired level of 80%. Records do not show clear decision making when employing staff with a caution or conviction.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or are in the process of being addressed in the case of ensuring more staff hold first aid qualifications and staff finishing their NVQ at Level 3. Supervision frequency has further improved and further improvements planned. The Registered Manager has completed training and holds all the relevant qualifications as well as 31 years of working in and managing children's residential services.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people have been settled between inspections and have been supported well during this time. Health plans are up to date allowing health support to continue to be coordinated. The management team ensure that full health histories are gained as part of the referral and introduction procedures. Efforts coordinated between the home's management and social workers have ensured the diverse needs of all individuals living at the home continue to be met. Staff have developed key skills and knowledge in supporting young people from different cultures.

Annual statutory medicals as well as health assessments and screening are organised. The promotion of the young people's health and well-being is a key priority throughout the time they live at the home. The young people's welfare is closely monitored and their health needs are well met. Routine doctor, optical and dental appointments are organised. The young people attended appointments on the day of the inspection and they confirmed that they are aware of their health arrangements. Residents were extremely complimentary on the support they receive from staff. Key workers coordinate support efficiently.

The key worker role includes health promotion work covering matters such as sexual relationships, smoking cessation, drug and alcohol misuse and healthy living. Many of these areas are supported by education arrangements. Good attendance allows young people to develop skills, knowledge and choices on how to lead safe and healthier lives. There is access to specialist services when required. Support from interpreters ensures clear communication.

Policy and procedural guidance to support health and well-being is available. Parental permissions for emergency treatment and for administering medicines and first aid have been gained. Practice and recording on the administration and storage of medication is clear. Safe storage was evident throughout the inspection. Staff are aware of residents' health needs and showed that they are competent to provide services to meet needs. Staff are clear on the procedures for administering prescription and non-prescription medicines. Formats for recordings

are established and this allows a clear audit trail on medicines administered. Staff receive training to ensure that they have the skills to provide first aid and safe handling and administration of medicines. This training has not been completed by all staff. Further training opportunities have been planned through senior management. Dates are to be confirmed.

Catering arrangements are being managed well. Menus are planned with the young people and staff encourage the young people to eat healthily. Residents clearly recognise links between good diet and exercise to remain healthy. They work closely alongside staff in preparing meals and many have developed skills through independence training to enable them to prepare their own meals. Independence training is a key focus of all placements. A range of plans, including pathway and after care arrangements, support individual growth and the acquisition of skills. Staff are proactive in planning support for cultural and religious festivals. All the young people have developed an understanding and appreciation of different cultures allowing beliefs and faiths to be followed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The staff and management team provide good continuity with all the services provided. Operational systems are implemented extremely well. The arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. This home provides suitable physical safety and security for the young people who are resident. They have learned how to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. There is mutual respect and trust between the young people and staff.

Reporting systems and actions taken in response to significant incidents have been appropriate. One incident involving some safeguarding issues had been reported in a timely manner. A clear record was produced on the actions taken. There is good internal scrutiny of records and practice enabling a prompt response to anything identified. The Ofsted protocol for reporting significant incidents is known and followed.

Safeguarding policy and procedural guidance is established. There is liaison with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) to ensure practice remains consistent with local protocols. The home has a nominated officer. Staff have received suitable training in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. They emphasise the need to report accurately and transparently when incidents occur. Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people within a guide. Bullying procedures are suitable to keep young people safe.

There is effective use of positive reinforcement opposed to the use of sanctions. Sanctions, when used, are fair. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives. Incidents requiring physical intervention have been reduced between inspections. All permanent staff are trained in selected methods and techniques. There is access to refresher training and support from a staff member who has a trainer certificate. Behaviour management plans and risk assessments support staff practice. Reporting protocols are firmly established for the times that young people go missing from the home without permission. There is effective use of risk assessments and specific responses are agreed in line with residents vulnerability.

The building is safe after being completely refurbished in 2007. There is an automatic response being taken to accommodation health and safety. Certification to show servicing and maintenance is taking place on fire, gas and electrical installations and appliances is held centrally. There is a premises fire risk assessment and regular practise fire drills are being carried out. No hazards to the residents safety were observed.

A random selection of personnel files was reviewed. Information held in-house confirmed that no staff had started work prior to being in receipt of an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. A suitable checking system is evident throughout the recruitment process. A few minor gaps in the available information was highlighted to management staff. Written evidence to show the decision making process followed for staff with cautions or convictions is not clear. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff practice remains responsive for the times young people are most in need. A coordinated response is taken in meeting the needs of all the young people living at the home. Support provided is coordinated within a multidisciplinary framework, ensuring young people continually make progress. Social workers confirmed working relationships are good. All work undertaken is subject to regular review. A good quality of care is being provided ensuring young people achieve and develop their potential.

Individual's needs are clearly outlined within a range of plans including detailed placement plans, risk assessments and health plans. Increasing residents' awareness of equality and diversity issues forms part of the ongoing work programmes. This allows individuals to gain an appreciation of other cultures as well as gaining self-knowledge and understating on how local and wider communities operate. Staff possess good knowledge on all the young people living at the home and this allows them to successfully manage the peer group dynamic. Young people, some of whom have refugee status, are being looked after well. Staff are extremely receptive to new ways of working enabling cultural needs to be met.

Developing educational potential forms a clear part of the home's philosophy of care. Educational opportunities are tailored to meet individuals needs. Suitable Arrangements are in place for all the young people. School attendance was reported to have been good prior to the summer holidays. Staff were proactively supporting the young people for their return back to their respective school or college placement in September. A young person commented, 'I cannot wait!'. College placements have been accessed for those young people who have recently completed their compulsory education. These should provide improved life opportunities and better prospects for the world of work. The results of GCSE examinations are eagerly awaited. Staff celebrate achievements. Each resident has a clearly laid out personal education plan.

Staff practice engages the young people in a range of activities to develop skills and individual potential through new experiences. Risk assessments supported camping trips during the summer holidays. There are suitable resources available at the home and within the surrounding community. Recreation is clearly linked to developing healthy lifestyles. Staff encourage individual's aspirations. Some residents select to spend time with their friends in the surrounding community.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Outcomes for the young people are positive and demonstrate that individualised care is being provided. Statutory reviews take place at the correct frequency enabling plans and targets to be adjusted when individual's needs change. Reports are produced for each review and meeting. Staff discuss review recommendations ensuring that the young people fully comprehend decisions affecting them. Key workers communicate and interact with residents on a daily basis to clarify the exact arrangements in place. Rules and boundaries are firmly established and accepted. Detailed written placement plans show the areas of work being addressed. Staff practice is capable of responding to matters as they arise but more importantly is now seen to be proactive. Some sensible negotiations took place preventing potential areas of conflict impacting on routines.

Practice embraces the Every Child Matters framework that forms part of the government's vision to improve children's services. Efforts enable successful outcomes to be achieved. Plans highlight the response being taken to equality and diversity matters including religion and cultural identity. There is good clarity established within records which provide a permanent overview on all the work that takes place. Information provides a clear account of individual progress and successes as well as the occasional disappointment. The young people provided many positive comments on their experiences whilst living at the home. They continue to be fully involved in decisions affecting them.

The format used for storing records allows easy access to pertinent information. Staff are familiar with case files and residents' specific needs. All the young people are treated fairly.

The outcomes being achieved provide clear indicators that referrals and introductions are being successfully matched to staff's skills and experience. Consultation with partner agencies and professionals occur throughout the time that the young people live at the home. The home has a clear child centred philosophy of care outlined within the statement of purpose. The quality of care being provided is to a good standard. Systems are known by staff and sensibly implemented in order that the young people comprehend their arrangements in place. Contact arrangements are clearly outlined. Support from advocacy services, children's rights and independent visitors is available for young people with limited or no family contact.

Communication and appropriate consultation between staff, children and their parents, social workers and other professionals takes place. The ability of staff to maintain relationships with residents is acknowledged as a key factor in securing placement stability. The staff team works hard to ensure placements remain focussed. The home's management team provides regular summaries on residents' progress through ongoing evaluation of placement plans. This shows a clear commitment to improving the quality of care and experiences being gained at the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The management team is familiar with the formal response required for pathway and aftercare planning. Plans are developed through statutory review procedures. Assessments include input from residents, staff and social workers. This approach ensures decisions are agreed and areas of responsibility are known from the start. The age and stage of residents' placements meant that formal pathway planning was required for three young people. Assessments had been

completed and detailed plans produced. Ongoing discussions take place between the home's management team, key workers and placing authority social workers to ensure plans remains focussed.

Pathway plans run in conjunction with other plans and clearly set out placement needs. Placement experiences provided at the home allow residents to gain life skills that will support them into adulthood. Programmes operated, routines followed and placement planning is clearly linked. Written in-house independence training plans provide some of the detail on work being undertaken. Access to college placements is integral to planning. The home's management team is proactive in setting up meetings for residents. This means that the young people are being prepared well for their future.

The home is safe and decorated and furnished to a good standard. There is ample 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. Young people have their own personalised bedroom. Bathing facilities are suitable. Bathrooms and toilet facilities comply with national minimum standards for children's homes. Established routines are suitable to ensure the accommodation remains clean and tidy.

The home is situated on a council estate. Relationships and appropriate links with neighbours and the surrounding community are maintained. Community resources are frequently utilised by residents. Staff provide advice to young people on how to stay safe when they are out in the community. Relations with the local community police are established. The home is close to public transport, rail links, health and leisure facilities. Shops and supermarkets are close by, making food shopping easy.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There are quality assurance systems being used by the home's management team to maintain the home's operation. The home has remained stable between inspections under the leadership of a qualified and experienced Registered Manager. The management team continue to reflect on services being provided making ongoing improvements. This is particularly evident in the response taken to managing referrals and meeting the diverse needs of the young people living at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Policy and guidance has been produced and there is an appointed equalities champion. The culture and ethos of the home is continually evolving. The service has been responsive in linking equality and diversity throughout the 24 hour curriculum. Equality and fairness is reflected within staff's practice. Staff are good at listening to residents and allow individuals opportunities to voice their views, opinions and concerns. Transparent communication with residents and social workers demonstrates a real commitment to further improving equality in practice. The young people acquire an appreciation of the respect for their own and other cultures, in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of residents is being addressed to a good standard.

Staff hold regular meetings to tailor support. Internet research is undertaken to gain knowledge on different cultures and faiths. Contacts have been established within the surrounding community providing good advice and support. Interpreter services are used for young people

whose speak English as an additional language. Dates to attend formal equality and diversity training have not yet been secured.

The staff team are competent. Positive working relationships have been established ensuring residents continue to experience stable lifestyles. Management support being provided means that staff are clear on their individual roles. Practice on the whole meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations. The staff team are extremely well motivated.

Deployment of staff is good. This means that the needs of the young people are being met whilst ensuring the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken. There is access to NVQ at level 3 training which is a recognised qualification to work with children and young people. The management team encourage staff to complete their studies and improve the percentage of staff that hold this qualification. There is also access to NVQ at level 4 in care and management. The competencies and skills staff have continue to grow through access to training. Records maintained on training attended by staff are incomplete.

Checks take place to monitor the home's operation. Reports are maintained in-house and are made available to those permitted to read them. The home's management team have a detailed written development plan outlining how the home's operation will be maintained. This has provided much of the focus for the improvements between inspections. There is improving use of self-evaluation and reflective practice recognises areas where further improvements can be made.

Some records are incomplete and lack clarity in how staff are being managed. Systems used to record induction and foundation training, supervision and staff's personal development and appraisal provide insufficient detail. The evidence base to show how well supervision, personal development and appraisal is coordinated is to be reviewed by the home's management team. The home utilises a casual pool of staff members. Limited induction and supervision records are held.

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. Information is easy to access within the office area. Staff use the guidance to ensure a consistent response continues to be taken to support residents.

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 meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

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- complete programmes of staff training on first aid and safe handling and management of medicines (NMS 13.5, 13.1)
 - ensure written evidence is produced, outlining the full circumstances, if staff are to be employed with a caution or conviction (NMS 27)
 - improve the clarity of information within management records (NMS 28.4, 28.7, 31.4, 31.5)
 - provide ongoing equality and diversity training to further compliment staff practice (NMS 31.5)
 - improve information on induction and supervision for casual staff members (NMS 31.2, 28.2)
 - continue supporting staff to complete their Level 3 National Vocational Qualification. (NMS 29.5)