

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 home provides medium to long-term care for up to six young people of either gender aged 10 years to under 18 years. The large detached house has a front car park and a fenced rear garden. The premises include two staff offices, a large kitchen, dining room, lounge, a quiet room and an education room. All bedrooms are single and are situated on the first floor. There are sufficient toilets, showers and baths for the young people. There is a flat to enable young people to acquire independence skills and this is used to support young people in placement within the home. The home has several areas to hold meetings and for young people to meet family members in private. It is situated 10 minutes from a city centre with nearby bus stops enabling young people to commute into the city and surrounding areas. The home has its own transport in the form of a people carrier.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full unannounced inspection which considered the key national minimum standards in the outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic-well being and organisation. The inspection monitored the progress towards the three recommendations which had been outstanding from a previous inspection. Five young people were living in the home four of whom were seen during the inspection.

This has been a difficult period with considerable changes in the management, staffing and young people accommodated. The management and staff team remain enthusiastic and well motivated. They continue to develop and deliver good quality care to young people. Staff effectively support and protect young people enabling them to achieve positive outcomes in their personal social and emotional development. Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection in respect of risk assessments for the self-administration of medication and the recruitment of staff.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were three recommendations made at the last inspection and no actions. Management have taken appropriate action to ensure all three of these have been addressed in respect of fire drills, door signage and restraint recording. At least four fire drills, including the evacuation of staff and children from the building and fire drills at night, take place during a 12 month period and are clearly recorded including the time of drills. A review of signage in the home has been done to reduce any unnecessary institutional signs other than those specifically required to be displayed.

Management reviewed the records of restraint to address issues arising and subsequently regularly monitor all entries.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's health and dietary needs are clearly identified and met. Although there has been no cook for some months, staff and young people work very well together to maintain the kitchen in good order. They prepare and present a range of healthy nutritious meals. Staff are trained in food hygiene and provide clear guidance to young people about meal preparation and food storage.

Young people's health needs are met well. There are comprehensive health care plans developed and these are reviewed and updated. Parental consents for staff to administer non-prescribed medicines and emergency first aid to young people are sought to ensure that medical emergencies can be dealt with efficiently.

Young people's routine health needs are met through health care checks with local health services and the promotion of healthy lifestyle choices such as healthy eating, personal care, exercise and activities. High priority is also given to more specialist needs such as those arising from young people's mental health, sexuality, sexual health, substance misuse and smoking. Staff are provided with training in these areas and staff and young people can access guidance and support from specialists in these areas. There are good working relationships between staff and health care professionals. A placing social worker states, 'Staff have regular consultation with children and adolescent mental health workers to ensure appropriate support and strategies are in place.'

The arrangements for the safe administration and disposal of medication are effective and accurate records are made. Staff are trained in the safe handling and administration of medication and first aid and clearly understand the correct procedures to follow. However, in one case, an oversight meant that a risk assessment for the self-administration of medication has not been completed which could potentially place a young person's health at risk. In this instance this was a minor issue due to established common usage and practice by the young person.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The privacy and dignity of young people is respected. For example their views are given full consideration, information about them is kept confidentially and young people are encouraged to respect the privacy of others.

Young people receive a range of good quality information about how to make a complaint and there are effective informal and formal systems for them to raise an issue. Staff communicate well with young people and this means that concerns are

raised and dealt with as soon as possible. Young people also have access to people independent from the home with whom they can raise issues.

The safeguarding practice is effective and is supported by a range of policies and procedures and staff training. There is effective networking with the police and other safeguarding agencies and comprehensive risk assessments are carried out. Young people's concerns are taken seriously and the management take appropriate action to address any issues raised to secure the safety and welfare of young people. Notifications are made appropriately which means that the home works in partnership with relevant agencies including Ofsted, social workers and the families of young people.

Staff receive training in the prevention of bullying and are aware of the potential for oppressive behaviour in the context of ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, faith, belief and gender. Young people are encouraged to speak to staff if they experience bullying and they confirm there are people both in and outside the home they feel they can approach. Staff work positively with young people as individuals and in groups to build their confidence and self-esteem.

Positive action has been taken to reduce the number of unauthorised absences. There are clear and appropriate boundaries for young people about the expectations relating to their time away from the home and their return. When a young person has gone missing staff always make them welcome on their return and check out their welfare and well-being.

A risk assessment approach is taken to managing behaviour to ensure that young people are safe. From the findings of the assessments, behaviour management strategies are developed. Staff are trained in de-escalation techniques and physical intervention is used as a last resort. There is good support provided to young people to help them to manage their less positive behaviour. Individual targets are agreed with each young person which makes sure they are clear about the expectations and possible sanctions that may be applied following poor behaviour.

The staff develop good relationships with young people and work closely with family, social workers and youth offending services so that a consistent response is taken to the management of behaviour. This helps young people to keep safe and understand the consequences of their behaviour; young people say that staff are generally fair and that they understand the consequences of their behaviour.

There is some exemplary practice in the management of health and safety issues. Health and safety checks are diligently recorded, regular monitoring takes place and staff and young people are informed of any changes to practice and procedure; this ensures that they are up to date with developments. The home is reasonably well maintained with repairs and replacements regularly reported. Staff consistently raise the young people's awareness of the importance of keeping themselves safe both in the home and in the community and this helps them to make appropriate choices.

The home has an established and effective system for the vetting and supervision of

visitors and the recruitment of suitable staff. This ensures that adults working with the young people are suitable to do so.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

A young person's individual needs are constructively identified and well met by the implementation of their placement plan. Young people are given individual support to meet all aspects of their identified needs and wishes. Specialist services and support for young people are accessed such as, education specialists. Young people are provided with information which allows them to contact services without recourse to staff. The individuality of each young person is acknowledged and staff promote inclusion within the group and within the community.

High priority is given to developing the learning and educational skills of young people. Staff develop effective individual weekly routines to promote learning and development so that young people grow in their confidence and self-esteem. When young people have experienced periods of exclusion in their last year of school staff effectively access additional support from a range of specialist resources. This means they can enhance their skills and achieve educational attainments. One of the young people stated, 'I have had a hard year but got through it very well.' Another young person successfully obtained a job and was also put forward for national vocational qualification Level 2 in health and social care.

Young people are given support and encouragement to plan and take part in a wide range of leisure activities, personal hobbies or interests and group activities, such as the annual holiday. Staff make the most of individual activities to develop relationships with young people to help enhance their personal and social skills. Young people say they enjoy the activities and outings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The needs and wishes of young people are detailed in their placement plan with due consideration taken of issues relating to ethnicity, gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief. Young people confirm they are aware of their placement plans and have the opportunity to discuss these with their key workers and at reviews. All young people's placement plans are regularly monitored by management, updated by key workers and revised at statutory reviews. Staff demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of each young person's care plan and considerable insight in respect of their personal needs and emotional welfare. Young people are encouraged to make meaningful contributions to the review process and take part in decision making about plans for their future.

Staff recognise the importance and impact of contact arrangements for young people. They promote and facilitate positive relationships with relatives, friends and

placing authority staff so that young people maintain their social contacts and support in the community. Young people confirm that they are able to contact family and friends, either through telephone contact or arranged visits.

There is a clear referral and placement matching process to ensure that young people's needs can be met by the service. A placing social worker confirms that, 'On admission risk assessments are completed and other strategies and actions are put in place.' Staff give a warm welcome to young people, provide them with useful personalised information and introduce them to the other residents and the facilities available in the home; this helps young people to settle into the home. Similarly, staff work closely with other professionals, families and carers to arrange a smooth transition for young people to new placements. There have been a relatively high number of young people leaving with several successful planned transitions, for example, one moving on to a foster care placement and two into independent living.

There has been little stability within the resident group due to so many changes. This means attendance at resident group meetings has not been a priority for young people. Staff creatively use one-to-one opportunities, through key working and activities, to consult with young people and get their views. More recently tea-meetings have been utilised as an opportunity for group discussion of topical issues and planning for the weekly menus and activities. Staff have begun to record these sessions so that meaningful action plans can be agreed and any decisions made are reported. Young people are consulted regarding their needs and wishes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people and staff have jointly developed pathway plans which means clear plans are developed decisions about their future can be made; these plans are regularly reviewed. A placing social worker confirms, 'All units have copies of young people's pathway plans and care plans and regular meetings are held to ensure that appropriate support is given and action taken.' Young people take part in the daily household tasks and are encouraged and supported to remain in care until they are 18, and sometimes longer where this is appropriate. Staff prepare them for moving on and, with the co-operation of the housing authority, try to ensure they have a secure tenancy to move into. Staff successfully enable the young people to access other local services so that they can access further education or employment. A professional worker states, 'Connexions advisors are available to provide advice and help young people access further training and work experience.' The staff work very well in partnership with other agencies to achieve positive outcomes for young people.

The children's home is suitable for its purpose, is near to a range of community facilities and it is reasonably well maintained. The home provides a safe secure environment for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of young people are addressed well, regarding personal, social and cultural issues. This is demonstrated, for example, through staff challenging offensive behaviour and language. Staff regularly engage young people in discussion, challenge prejudice and raise awareness.

The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the service provided and is reviewed annually and updated. A useful informative welcome guide has been produced for young people and is issued with a colourful welcome pack of useful requisites and items for personal care so that young people have some basic items upon admission.

Staff receive regular individual supervision and staff team meetings. The management team have made progress in establishing formal planning and delivery of supervision and staff confirm they feel well supported. The management are available and approachable and effectively maintain high morale and enthusiasm amongst the staff team.

Staff are encouraged and supported to attain qualifications. Staff attend training to achieve and maintain competency in their care practice. They confirm there is a wide range of training available and updates are provided in specific topics such as behaviour management, administration of medication and food hygiene.

The young people benefit from the individual care provided by a relatively small, permanent staff group. There are an adequate number of staff on each shift to provide care for young people. However, there have been a number of staff vacancies for a significant period of time. This means the core group of staff increasingly cover additional hours over a prolonged period of time to maintain consistency of care and stability for young people. The staff continue to be committed to providing consistent, stable care in a safe, secure, homely environment for young people.

The home is monitored in all aspects of service delivery and appropriate action is taken to maintain quality of care within the home. There are regular monthly Regulation 33 visits and reports by an independent visitor to the home. The feedback to management and staff is constructive and any actions made are followed up. The management monitoring of the service delivery appears to be limited, although records are signed and systems are clearly reviewed and feedback given to staff during handover and staff meetings.

Young people's records are held securely and confidentially and cover all matters required in the regulations. Young people are aware of their files and are encouraged to contribute their written comments.

The newly appointed manager is suitably qualified and competent and has delivered effective leadership of the home's staff and operations through a prolonged period of

change. Young people make good progress because of the effective management systems that are in place.

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 young people keeping and administering their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible to do so, and are able to lock their medication somewhere not readily accessible to other young people (NMS 13.9)
- ensure the home is staffed at all times of the day and night, at or above the minimum level specified under standard 30.2. (NMS 30.1)