

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 has been operational for a number of years and is well established within the local area.

The home is an extended three bedroom, end-of-terrace house within a residential area, close to local shops, transport links and community resources. The home provides care and accommodation for two young people, of either gender, between the ages of 12 and 16.

Accommodation is provided over two floors; the ground floor includes a kitchen, lounge, dining room and young people's lounge. Young people have their own bedrooms which are located on the upper floor.

On the day of this visit two young people were accommodated, although they were not present for the majority of this inspection. They were invited to talk with the inspector but declined on this occasion. Therefore young people's views have not been directly sought at this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced full inspection all the key national minimum standards were inspected. The main focus of the inspection was to find out how well the home meets the needs of young people living there.

This is a good children's home in all respects, that meets most of the standards and regulations. It provides a safe and supportive environment where young people are able to develop the skills, competence and confidence they need for adult life. Young people are protected from harm. Young people have a say in the decisions about their health, education, seeing their family, how they spend their spare time, and their future plans, and their views are respected. Staff are there if young people need someone to talk to, are having personal problems or want to make a complaint.

Planning for young people's care is comprehensive. Young people's needs are identified and support plans are put into practice to ensure young people get the help, guidance and advice they need on a daily basis. Staff work in a coordinated way with young people, their family and people from other agencies involved in the young people's lives to ensure that young people continue to get the right support. This means that plans for the future are in the young people's best interest.

Young people are looked after by a group of competent and well-trained staff with

the right skills and experience to support vulnerable young people. The children's home is well managed and effectively run to promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

The only shortfalls are in relation to consistently recording meals served to young people, evaluating and reviewing young people's risk assessments, decoration, particularly in young people's bedrooms, and consistently submitting monthly monitoring audits to Ofsted on a monthly basis.

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the home's Statement of Purpose has been reviewed and updated. It now provides clear and accurate information for parents and social workers about how the home operates including that the home is able to take emergency admissions.

The Registered Manager has implemented a written policy which sets out the procedure to be followed in the event of any allegation of abuse or neglect, with particular reference to procedures within the home itself as opposed to the wider organisation.

The Registered Manager has also reviewed guidance regarding room searches so that it is clear for staff and understood by the young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people enjoy a choice of meals that are varied and healthy, whereby their good health is promoted. However, records of meals served are not consistently maintained, which is required under legislation relating to children's home.

Young people's meetings provide a forum for each young person to choose meals and agree the menu. Young people are encouraged to help with meal preparation, shopping and how to budget. Young people are also encouraged to assist staff in growing an assortment of fresh fruit and vegetables in the garden, where the tomatoes and lettuces can still be found. Staff are trained in food hygiene and ensure the young people have a basic knowledge about how food should be managed safely.

The young people's health needs are identified and services are provided to meet them. Each young person has a health care plan which details the support required to meet their needs. Any illnesses, accidents or injuries are well recorded. A representative from the child and adolescent mental health service regularly attends the service to discuss practice issues and provide advice; other health professionals are also appropriately accessed and the young people choose whether they wish staff to accompany them to appointments. Health promotion is an integral part of each young person's care and they are discouraged from smoking, alcohol, or

substance misuse. Referrals to supportive clinics or networks are made if the young people agree and health education is discussed in key worker sessions. Staff receive appropriate training in a number of areas linked to promoting good health.

Medication is stored securely. Records of all medication administered are kept up to date, with systems to monitor stocks in place. Following appropriate assessment of risk, young people are given some responsibility for the self-administering of certain medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff respect young people's privacy and handle information about them confidentially. They and the young people are clear about the circumstances under which such information is accessed and when an individual's room or possessions are searched. Each young person has their own room which they can lock and staff or young people knock before entering. The young people can use a telephone in private by either using the home's cordless phone in a quiet area of the home or with staff support if necessary. Wherever possible, a mixed staff group is on duty enabling sensitivity to gender issues.

Complaints are taken seriously and investigated appropriately within the required timescales. Informal concerns are managed by the home and more serious complaints are formally investigated through the local authority complaints process. The young people know how to raise concerns, they are listened to and their concerns are taken seriously. A complaints log is maintained within the home. This would enable any patterns of complaints to be identified and tackled as a whole, if appropriate.

Staff respond appropriately to safeguarding concerns whereby the welfare of the young people is promoted. The home's policies and procedures are comprehensive, requiring that all staff have an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure before employment and all the staff are trained in child protection. In addition, the safeguarding procedures are readily available in the home for the staff to reference.

Bullying is regarded as unacceptable and effective measures are taken to reduce the risk of, as well as to manage, any instances. Staff are alert to those young people who are likely to bully as well as those who are vulnerable. Appropriate support is offered by staff and they liaise effectively with schools when necessary.

Clear strategies by the home ensure the staff are responsive to unauthorised absence and the young people are treated positively when they return. Individual risk assessments ascertain the likelihood of absence and details of the action to be taken are included in their plan of care. In the event, good records are maintained and the police and other relevant parties are involved as appropriate. In addition, a representative from an independent advocacy service visits the home and will speak with young people individually if they wish. All significant events are well recorded

and monitored.

Staff respond positively when the young people behave well and are constructive when their behaviour is inappropriate. There are many opportunities for the young people to express their views and the staff support them in developing strategies they can use to manage their feelings. A monetary reward system which focuses on each young person's areas of need also works well. Incidents are infrequent but, in the event, appropriate sanctions and physical interventions are used. Good records are maintained and all the staff are trained in 'protecting rights in caring environments'. This provides techniques in behaviour management which promote safe practice for staff in their response to young people's unacceptable behaviour.

Good measures are in place to maintain the safety and security of the young people. There are appropriate risk assessments for the premises as well as for activities undertaken. However, the effectiveness of action identified in minimising risk within young people's individual risk assessments is not always reviewed when needs have changed.

Positive steps are taken to protect against the risk of fire and other hazards. The required checks of equipment are undertaken and the necessary contracts are in place. In addition, the fire drills and the monitoring in place ensure that staff are appropriately trained.

Robust recruitment procedures are in place. All the necessary information is received prior to employment within the home. In addition, visitors and contractors are well monitored by being required to show evidence of identification and to sign the visitors' book when on site.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff view young people as individuals and ensure they receive help, support and guidance when they need it. Young people's needs are identified in placement plans, which are put into practice to a good standard. The home can meet a range of young people's potential needs, including healthy lifestyles, culture, sexuality, self-esteem and personal care.

Young people's education and achievement are encouraged and supported. Young people are doing well at school. Their plans provide details about their learning needs and how these are supported. The home's daily routines support young people's daily attendance within their educational placements. Staff provide practical and emotional support when young people experience difficulties going to school. This support always reflects young people's individual needs and issues they face. The home has good links with young people's schools, and works very effectively with their teachers to support their education and deal with any problems that may arise.

Staff encourage young people to enjoy their spare time and to take part in leisure activities at home and in the community. Young people are offered a wide range of activities in order to build confidence in their own abilities and make friends with young people from different social and cultural backgrounds. Young people have chosen to spend the larger proportion of their time with family members, which is positive for the young people and their families. The home is supportive in their approach of this.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's records provide a good insight into the individual needs of young people. Young people have written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. Staff put the plans into practice and these are reviewed to make sure that they are up to date and continue to meet their needs. Staff seek young people's views and ensure that they are listened to and their views about their lives are taken into account.

Young people have regular contact with their families to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff are able to provide extra support when necessary to promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

The home tries to ensure that young people move into the home in a sensitive way, as not all young people want to be in care. Staff are good at helping young people settle in, making sure they know what is expected of them, what to do if they are worried, and their way around the local area, if needed.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They are involved in decisions about what food they eat and what they do in their spare time. The provider and staff seek young people's views about how well they feel they are being looked after.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. Staff have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people consistent with good childcare.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to develop the skills they need for adult life suitable to their age and understanding. They routinely learn skills through taking part in the running of the home, and carrying out tasks such as cooking, tidying their bedrooms, bringing their washing down and managing money. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene, using public transport and making their own appointments with support. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future.

Young people have suitable personal allowances, including enough money for clothes and toiletries. They choose how to spend their allowances with support and guidance from staff and in this way learn how to manage money effectively. Support and guidance are given by staff to encourage young people to dress in an appropriate way, while still being able to express their individuality in how they dress, taking into account the season, their age and level of understanding.

Young people live in a comfortable and homely environment that meets their needs. The house is clean, decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people have personalised the home, choosing the colour scheme for their bedrooms and curtains to reflect their individual tastes. However, there is some graffiti in some parts of the bedrooms, which detracts from the environment the home strives to create.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people live in a home where there is a strong commitment to good childcare practice. As a result the home is effectively managed and run in young people's best interests. The Registered Manager and staff have created a warm and supportive environment where young people are valued. The children's guide provides important information about the home in a way that is easily understood by young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a strong commitment to delivering equality and diversity in practice. Staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with ensuring their needs are met. Staff value the rights of individuals to be different and promote respect and dignity.

Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful and they receive one-to-one supervision regularly. In addition, team meetings take place every month, to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer. They also reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. The staff team have a relevant qualification in working with young people. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home well. The number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and attending appointments. Staff have access to a comprehensive training programme that covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

The home has good systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The provider and Registered Manager consistently monitor the running of the home every month. However, copies of this report are not consistently sent to Ofsted on a monthly basis.

Young people are encouraged to read and make comments about what is written about them. The home's written records provide a good picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities.

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
10	ensure that a record of menus served is maintained. (Regulation 29 (1), Schedule 4 (10))	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the registered person of the home regularly reviews the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of risk assessments carried out (NMS 26.3)
- ensure that the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair, for example the décor in young people's bedrooms (NMS 24.3)
- ensure that monthly audits undertaken by the representative of the home are sent to Ofsted. (NMS 32.1)