

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 home is registered to provide care to a maximum of four young people of either gender between the ages of 14 years and 17 years. The building is a detached property that is in-keeping with the local area. The home is well-situated to access public transport and a wide range of social amenities. The home aims to offer a positive medium- to long-term living experience for four young people.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced visit was to monitor the home's performance against the key standards in the national minimum standards for children's homes.

The home is well-managed and staff are experienced and trained. They provide appropriate support for young people who speak very positively about the care they receive at the home. They state they 'feel safe' and staff always listen and take their concerns seriously. All key standards are inspected along with standard 15, leisure and standard 28, staff support. The outcomes for young people are judged as: outstanding in all outcome areas apart from being healthy that is judged as good. One action and one recommendation is made against outcome area being healthy.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the previous inspection, therefore, improvements to the home are recorded in the relevant outcome areas.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The cook and staff continue to promote and raise awareness of healthy eating and in recognition of this have achieved the Food for Health Gold award that is provided by the local authority. The cook, young people and staff talk positively about the food prepared and cooked at the home. Young people are encouraged to discuss their likes and dislikes and the cook plans menus to accommodate them. The atmosphere at the home is very relaxed and young people state they enjoy spending time in the kitchen with the cook and staff learning to cook and prepare snacks for themselves. They are free to go and make drinks whenever they wish. The manager is keen to promote variety in the diet and to cater for all cultural needs. Special diets are catered for. Menus provide information regarding the main meal of the day, but do not include breakfast or lunch. The manager and cook are keen to develop the menus further to include all meals and choices available.

Young people confirm they are provided with choices for breakfast and lunch. Changes to the main meal are recorded and food intake records are maintained for young people if this is an identified need. Discussions with staff and young people confirm that they are provided with a well-balanced and varied diet, with an emphasis on home cooked foods and plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables. The manager works in conjunction with the local authority's catering service who regularly supervise and monitor all records maintained by the cook. Where

appropriate, young people who are working towards their independence are involved in planning menus, shopping for ingredients and cooking a meal once a week. Young people's welfare is very well-promoted because they are provided with a well-balanced diet that caters for their dietary or cultural needs. Staff are keen to promote healthy eating and encourage young people to understand the benefits of a healthy diet.

There are good systems in place to ensure the health needs of young people are met. The manager and staff work in partnership with young people, families and other professionals for example, social workers, consultants, doctors, looked after children's nurses and consultant specialists. Advice is available on a range of subjects such as smoking, alcohol, drugs and sexual matters. A range of information leaflets on health issues are available in the young people's computer room. The manager and staff are proactive in arranging appointments to address outstanding health needs for the young people and young people are supported and encouraged to attend. All young people are registered at the local doctor's surgery. Good records are maintained in young people's files of all appointments attended and their outcomes. The home receives support from the local authority health service and the looked after children's nurse is a regular visitor to the home. Young people's health needs are clearly identified and very well met. They attend a variety of medical appointments with the support and encouragement of staff. Young people are encouraged to have a healthy lifestyle and are supported by staff to achieve this.

Policies and procedures are in place for the safe handling of medication and staff are appropriately trained. The records are well structured, individual medical files are made up for young people. These contain a recent photograph, current medical information, consent forms signed by the doctor for the administration of homely remedies, a copy of staff signatures and current medical administration record (MAR) sheets for both prescribed and non-prescribed medication. In the main records are well-maintained. However, there is a recent error made in the recording of the administration of medicine. Staff take all unused medicines to the local pharmacist, although some staff are unclear of the procedure in place to ensure accurate disposal records are maintained. The manager monitors the records as part of her Regulation 34 checks and is proactive in addressing any concerns raised. Issues are dealt with through staff meetings and supervisions. The pharmacy inspector from the contracted chemist continues to monitor and audit the system. Good systems and monitoring are in place and staff are appropriately trained. However, errors made by staff when administering medication and the disposal of medication could compromise the welfare of young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people feel their privacy and dignity are respected, and they are able to give good examples of how this is implemented in their day-to-day life. For example, staff knock on their bedroom doors before entering, they can receive visitors in private and they state that staff treat and speak to them with respect. Young people have mobile phones and the use of the home's phone to call family, social workers and friends. Staff are aware of the need to share information on a need to know basis. Files are securely located and confidential information is stored appropriately.

There are excellent systems in place to ensure young people know what to do if they are unhappy about anyone or anything. Information about how to make a complaint is provided

to young people in a variety of ways. For example, there are young people's guides, leaflets, regular involvement from an advisory service and discussions with staff through young people's meetings and individual work. The manager addresses any minor concerns immediately before they reach the complaint stage. The council's complaints procedure is also in place. The manager works closely with this service and its representatives who visit both individual and groups of young people. In-house training is provided to staff to ensure everyone has a clear knowledge and understanding of the process. Parents, families, and members of the community are also able to complain directly to this service. All records of complaints dealt with internally or via the council's complaints department are recorded and outcomes given. The manager is active in addressing the concerns with all parties involved to include outcomes that provide, support, resolution, future expectations and consequences where appropriate. Young people feel confident in raising their concerns, they state they are supported by the staff where appropriate, and understand the system in place. They believe that the manager always tries to resolve any concerns they may have and will provide them with additional services to support them if that is required. Young people's welfare is promoted and safeguarded because they are clear about how to make a complaint. There is an effective and robust system in place to record, address and resolve any concerns made known by young people.

The manager continues to be proactive in promoting child protection. Policies and procedures are in place for the reporting of any suspicion of abuse. Staff are able to demonstrate an excellent awareness of the procedures and have a clear understanding of the whistle blowing policy. The manager has maintained the relationships she developed with other professionals, for example, schools, police, fire service, social workers, youth offending team and health professionals to enable them to work in partnership to support and address any areas of concern. Young people confirm they are given information and discussions take place with staff to help them learn how to keep themselves safe. Staff are trained in child protection. The manager monitors the training to ensure that the staff's knowledge is regularly updated.

All significant events in relation to the protection of children accommodated in the home are notified by the manager to the appropriate authorities. Staff are aware of the policies and procedures in place to follow when a young person goes missing. There are good working relationships between the police and the staff at the home. The police work to the 24 hour protocol, however, guidance is available for staff regarding age and vulnerability. If a young person is felt to be high risk then the police are informed immediately. Young people state they are happy at the home and the level of absconding has significantly reduced.

There continues to be a positive awareness amongst the staff team to promote an anti-oppressive atmosphere and tackle the issue of bullying through the meetings held for the young people and individual work, with both the victim and the bully. Prior to the admission of a young person, the manager ensures that the placement is suitable and able to provide the necessary protection for all the young people in her care. Risk assessments are completed at the time of admission and regularly updated. Posters are displayed in the computer room and information is available. Young people report they feel safe and have confidence any concerns they may have will be addressed immediately by the manager and the staff. The welfare of young people is safeguarded because robust systems are in place to ensure that young people are protected from bullying.

Detailed behaviour plans are in place and these are closely linked to individual risk assessments. These documents provide staff with excellent guidance when dealing with and managing

challenging behaviour. Behaviour charts are implemented for young people who feel they would benefit from this approach. Staff manage very difficult and challenging behaviour well and are consistent in their approach. A change of provider for the intervention training has been made. All staff are trained in a new approach to physical intervention with an emphasis on diffusion of the situation, wherever possible physical interventions are avoided. The staff are in the process of transferring over to the new recording system in line with the training. However, this is not all yet in place. In order to ensure that records contain all the necessary information the manager is continuing to use the old recording system whilst awaiting the training to complete the new paperwork. Young people state that they feel the staff are fair, they understand the rules of the house and the consequences if they are broken. Records of sanctions are appropriately maintained and closely monitored by the manager who will challenge staff regarding any sanction she feels is inappropriate. This practice ensures that the welfare of young people is safeguarded and promoted.

There is a designated member of staff responsible for health and safety issues. Health and safety records are very well-organised. There are regular checks maintained on the equipment in the home. Fire drills are held on a regular basis. Risk assessments are kept up to date. Staff receive the appropriate training in health and safety and fire issues. Monitoring of the records take place through the manager's Regulation 34 checks and Regulation 33 visits, any concerns found are immediately addressed. These measures ensure that young people are protected from physical harm arising from their environment.

Procedures are in place to follow regarding the safe recruitment of staff. Staff recruitment records are maintained at the council's human resources department, these were not inspected. However, no concerns were found at previous inspections and there are no new staff working at the home. The manager is very involved in the process of recruitment and has a clear knowledge and understanding of the council's policies and procedures to ensure the safety of the young people regarding the recruitment of staff. She has completed safe recruitment training. The manager maintains details at the home of staff Criminal Records Bureau checks in order to ensure they are kept up to date and is provided with access to all recruitment checks once they are in place. Children's welfare is protected because there is careful selection and vetting of all staff working at the home prior to their appointment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The management and staff provide excellent support to ensure young people in the home have their specific needs met. This covers all aspects of a young person's life providing experiences and support within the home as well as engaging with other professionals. Strong links have been developed and are maintained with other professionals who work in partnership with the staff and young people at the home. All young people have an identified key worker supported by another member of staff. Key workers ensure that young people have the opportunities to discuss their needs and express their wishes. The manager consults with other professionals to ensure the young people benefit from a range of support services to support their individual needs.

The manager is committed to listening to young people, taking forward their ideas and suggestions and providing activities to cater for their individual needs. Young people are provided with a range of activities, both individual interest and group activities are perused.

The staff team have the skills to engage children in activities both inside and outside the home. Young people speak really positively about their personal interests and hobbies, which include private golf, drum and swimming lessons as well as the group activities, clubs and organisations they attend. Charity work is also promoted. Staff and young people are involved in fund raising events for the local church. They are once again preparing to take part in a sponsored walk for sports relief. Young people are learning and developing an understanding of living as part of a community. The manager stated that young people were keen to volunteer contributions from their pocket money to help victims of the recent Haiti disaster and a certificate is displayed on the young people notice board of the donations made. Activities take place within the home and regular holidays and trips are organised. Staff display photographs in frames of the activities young people participate in. Young people enjoy discussing the photographs and events that have taken place. All ideas and suggestions are shared and discussed with young people. Young people's social skills are well promoted as they are encouraged to participate in a range of activities and make individual choices regarding their social outings and activities.

The management and staff are committed to ensuring the young people in their care are provided with the appropriate education. They work in conjunction with education services to secure places for young people on alternative education placements in mainstream school is not an option. Staff encourage and support young people to attend their placements. Personal education plans (PEP) are on file and reviewed as and when appropriate. This practice ensures that young people's education is supported.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from a robust assessment of their needs. Placement plans include detailed risk assessments and behavioural strategies and addresses any areas that arise out of a young person's ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, faith or belief. The necessary looked after children documentation is provided. Young people are encouraged to participate and contribute to information contained in agreements regarding the expectations of the young people and the staff. The social worker, young person and manager sign and agree the information. The manager is proactive in requesting and chasing any outstanding paperwork to ensure the home receives the necessary information to enable them to provide appropriate care and support to young people.

Young people are actively involved in contributing to decisions being made about their lives. They attend their reviews and complete consultation documents beforehand. Key workers will advocate on their behalf if this is appropriate, and independent advocates are available to offer them support. Young people have a good understanding of the contact arrangements for friends and families and rooms are made available for visitors if appropriate.

Young people feel valued, they believe that not only are their views heard but wherever possible the manager and staff implement their ideas. There are clearly good relationships between staff and young people. The atmosphere at the home is relaxed informal and homely. Young people state they are happy, they feel safe at the home and the staff support, help and treat them well.

The manager remains a member of the local neighbourhood Police And Communities Together (PACT). Meetings look at the problems in the neighbourhood and work with members of the local community to look at the issues and offer solutions. Young people are supported to be

part of the local youth PACT. This enables young people to have a say about the local community and facilities. The management and staff are also committed to supporting the young people who have moved out as this step to independence can be a, difficult, challenging and a lonely experience for many young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Preparation for leaving the home and acquiring the necessary skills for adulthood are a fully integrated part of the care provided in the home. Young people speak positively about the opportunities they are given to develop their skills particularly with regard to cooking, preparing snacks, and shopping for items for themselves, their rooms, or communal areas. Pathway plans are completed and meetings are held where appropriate.

Young people live in a comfortable home that is decorated and furnished to a very good standard providing a clean, homely and warm environment for young people. Several improvements have been made to the downstairs of the house since the last inspection. A porch is now in place that creates a more inviting entrance and provides additional security to the home. Due to the council's decision to position a crossing outside the home, additional off-road parking has been created to overcome the problem. The kitchen has also been completely refurbished. The manager is proactive and ensures damage is immediately repaired or replaced.

Young people take an active role in ideas and suggestions to improve the home and garden. The construction of a conservatory adding an extra room for young people is now complete and furnished. The garden is well-maintained with a pagoda and decking. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms and choose colour scheme when they are due for refurbishment. The welfare of young people is safeguarded because young people are able to live in a comfortable and homely environment and take an active role in decisions made regarding the improvement and development of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A detailed Statement of Purpose is available for prospective young people, families, placing authorities which outlines the principles, practice and the services that they can expect from the home. The manager ensures this document is regularly updated. In addition a colourful guide is also provided to young people.

Staff feel they received excellent support from their colleagues and the management team. Staff receive regular supervision and additional supervision is provided if the manager of staff member feels it is appropriate. Staff are confident that they can discuss concerns at any time as the management team are always approachable and will make time available for staff. Staff meetings are held on a fortnightly basis and form a valuable communication tool for staff to maintain their consistent approach and sort out any concerns and discrepancies. Meetings are well-structured and include guest speakers from a range of services.

The manager is experienced, qualified and totally committed to further improve the service and provide better outcomes for young people. Young people benefit from an experienced, permanent, qualified and committed team who work closely together to provide a consistent approach to young people. Staff and young people feel supported, and this is clearly evident

when observing practice, examining records and talking to staff and young people. An excellent induction is provided that takes place over the six months probationary period. The induction booklet provides staff with a sound baseline to complete move on to achieve their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). There are no staff currently completing induction. Mandatory training is provided and staff receive regular refresher training. Staff appraisals are completed yearly and identify training needs for the following year, these documents are reviewed to ensure staff receive the appropriate training. The majority of permanent childcare staff have achieved NVQ at level 3 and the remaining staff are currently completing it. Senior staff have achieved NVQ at level 4. The manager maintains records of all staff training attended and planned. Young people benefit from staff who are well- supported and committed to regularly attend training to update and improve their knowledge and practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people benefit from living in a home where the Registered Manager and staff team are committed to meeting the different needs of each young person. Staff are well informed about young people's needs in relation to their identity and backgrounds and are fully aware of how to help and support them in a fair and non-judgemental way.

The monthly monitoring visits are carried out and are fully integrated into the quality assurance system of the home. Any action points are clearly identified and are followed up by the manager. In addition the manager completes her own monthly monitoring in line with Regulation 34. The staff are fully involved in the process and action taken on any points raised. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that the manager audits all records.

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
13	ensure staff are aware of and implement the guidance available for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines recieved into the home. (Regulation21.1)	15 February 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a record is maintained of menus (as served) that demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet. (NMS 10.4)