

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

This children's home is owned by a registered charity who provides a number of children's homes and a residential family centre. In addition, the organisation offers day and respite care to children with disabilities. The home provides long-term accommodation for four children, of either gender, aged between eight and under 17 years. Two semi-detached houses have been combined into one to make a large family house on the edge of a residential estate and next to, but set above, a busy main road. Ground floor accommodation comprises of two lounges, a dining area, kitchen, utility room, telephone kiosk, staff office and two toilets. The first floor accommodation is separated into two halves by a door. Each half comprises of two bedrooms, one self-contained staff sleep-in room and a bathroom.

The home is within walking distance of shops and public transport to the nearby city centre. There is a wide range of recreational opportunities within the immediate community and surrounding areas. Four young people are accommodated and all contributed to this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection in which all key standards were assessed. This is a good service with one outstanding feature. The staff present as enthusiastic, competent and skilled in caring for young people with complex and diverse emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people benefit from placements that meet their needs in respect of their health, education and therapeutic support. Young people fully contribute to the discussions regarding their future plans and are consulted about daily events. A particular strength of this home is the culture of supporting young people to access education and develop the necessary skills for adult life. Relationships between staff and young people were noted as being particularly strong. The very low incidences of physical restraint within this home is considered a product of such positive and appropriate relationships.

There are five good practice recommendations made at this inspection in order to continue to improve the overall quality of care. This includes ensuring young people are provided with information to help them stop or reduce smoking, assessing the risks associated with bullying behaviour and developing the complaints procedure for young people to easily access. Documents were not available with regards to the maintenance of boilers or electrical hard wiring checks. Monitoring of records was noted to have not been as consistent over the last three months. One action has also been made with regards to locks on internal doors that cannot be opened from the inside. This was assessed as a potential health and safety concern.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no previous actions or recommendations made at the last inspection

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health needs of young people are managed effectively at this home. Young people enjoy a range of healthy eating options which they say they enjoy. A young person said 'the food here is really good'. Menus are written by consulting young people on a weekly basis. Meals from different cultures other than British are fully represented within the planned menus. This means that young people can enjoy a diverse range of meals from different countries.

Effective and up to date health care plans ensure staff know and understand young people's medical needs. Plans include historical information about each young person including immunisations and vaccinations. Young people are registered with the local General Practitioner (GP) on arrival as well as with opticians and dentists. Records of all visits to health professionals provide a good level of information for staff. This means that staff are able to check that young people are attending their appointments. Specialist nurses who work with young people accommodated in residential care are available. However, health assessment is maintained through the use of a health questionnaire which the young people complete. Staff report that as young people are not always able to identify what support they may need, this service is not often used. For example, while young people who smoke are discouraged from doing so, there is limited information and guidance on helping them to reduce or stop smoking. There are no leaflets, notices or contact number details for young people to access with regards to the harmful effects of smoking tobacco. This means that young people are not given the fullest opportunity to consider reducing their smoking habit.

Medication is stored and administered in a safe and well managed way. Staff receive training regarding appropriate administration procedures. Records are accurate and kept up to date. Parental consent for staff to administer medication and minor first aid is kept on file. All staff have received training in first aid. Staff care for young people who are ill and ensure they are regularly checked. A young person said 'staff look after me when I'm ill'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are kept safe by a competent and enthusiastic staff team who understand the needs of young people well. Young people live in a house where their personal space is respected. confidentiality is considered and managed appropriately. Staff are aware of safeguarding young people through reference to procedures.

Previous child protection concerns have been managed in line with local procedures. Staff know and understand the organisation's whistle blowing policy. This means that all staff are fully aware of their responsibilities in protecting young people.

There is a complaints system in operation that refers to both the local authority and the organisation's procedures. Information is also included in the guide for young people in placement. However, a number of young people are not clear about how to make a complaint and feel that their views would not necessarily be taken seriously. The complaint log does not reflect any issues or concerns expressed by young people since the last inspection. Therefore recordings of complaints do not always fully reflect the concerns expressed by young people at this home.

Relationships between staff and young people are friendly, good natured and supportive. Young people feel staff treat them with respect. Staff receive behaviour management training that includes the use of physical restraint. However, restraint is rarely a requirement at this home as staff are highly competent in diffusing potentially challenging situations. The use of sanctions are proportionate. Young people understand the need for boundaries to assist them to develop socially acceptable behaviour.

Young people who are missing without the agreement of staff are reported in line with the home's procedures. Records are maintained of the actions taken in ensuring young people are safe when found. Young people always have opportunities to talk with staff about why they went missing. This is a particularly strong aspect of the service.

The staff respond to any concerns regarding bullying behaviour and ensure young people are safe and supported. There is an effective bullying policy in place and information for young people to access what to do if they feel they are being bullied. Previous incidents have been managed well by the staff. Young people feel they can talk to staff about bullying. However, there is limited assessment of the potential risk of bullying recorded in young people's placement plans. This means that while staff are confident in addressing such behaviour, the lack of focused risk assessment could undermine this good work.

Fire safety is managed very well at this home. A fire safety risk assessment is reviewed annually to ensure any actions required to develop practice are considered. Staff, young people and visitors are all informed of the evacuation procedures in the event of a fire. Fire drills are undertaken regularly with the outcome that the procedure is known and understood by staff and young people. Checks to fire equipment, alarms, emergency lighting and fire doors are completed weekly and recorded. This ensures staff are vigilant about the risk of fire within this home.

A number of internal doors have locks that cannot be opened from the inside when closed. There is a potential risk of young people being accidentally locked in such rooms which could compromise the high standard of safety evident within this setting.

Portable electrical appliances are checked annually. However, there was no evidence of hard wiring certification or an annual maintenance check on the gas installations. This means it is unclear whether such mandatory checks are carried out within the agreed timeframes.

There is an effective recruitment system in place that ensures young people are cared for by competent and suitably vetted staff. Young people play a role in the recruitment process which promotes inclusion in the development and decision making of the home. There is a signing in and out procedure for visitors to this home. Identification is checked to ensure suitability. This means that young people are kept safe by such practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Education is actively and progressively promoted to meet the aspirations of each young person. There is a culture within this home which promotes young people to engage in and benefit from education and training. Young people respond well to this with the result of maintaining their education despite the difficulties experienced in their lives. For example, a young person has won a prize for an outstanding piece of creative writing. All young people attend education and training. A young person said 'I want to do well at school so that I can get a good and well paid job when I'm older'.

Young people benefit from individual support that effectively meets their needs. There is a keyworking system in place that helps young people to discuss issues that concern or worry them. Therapeutic support is provided that ensures young people have the best opportunities to receive the help they need. For example, art psychotherapy is available. Trained therapists are also invited regularly to staff team meetings to discuss the young people and how best to effectively care for and support them. A member of staff felt this level of consultation was very good and helped the team to work closer together in meeting the complex and challenging needs of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from structured and well organised placements that meet their needs. Care plans provide a detailed account of the progress of young people that refers to their health, education and behavioural needs. Young people are fully involved in the planning of their care arrangements. Reviews are held on time and young people are able to contribute to the discussions about their future plans. Young people were positive about this aspect of their placement at this home.

Contact arrangements are planned, recorded and regularly reviewed. Young people are able to maintain positive contact with their parents and friends at a level they

feel is right for them. Staff understand the importance of promoting contact and work effectively with parents. Young people are able to have friends stay over night which young people were very pleased about.

Young people are able to voice their opinions and views to the staff about all aspects of their care. Although resident meetings are not held regularly due to the wishes of the young people, staff invite residents to attend the end of the team meeting. This helps staff to focus on the needs of young people in the planning of how the home is run. Young people were not all happy with the outcome of their concerns but felt that the staff do listen to them. Therefore, young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation is of a good standard that meets the needs of young people well. Décor, furnishings and layout provide young people with a secure, warm and homely environment to relax and study. Maintenance and repairs to the home are completed timely. Overall the home represents the value staff put in to making young people feel comfortable living here. Young people contribute to the colour scheme of the house and are able to personalise their rooms to their own tastes. Young people were positive about living at this house and pleased with their bedrooms.

Young people are encouraged to develop their independent skills at a pace that is suitable to them. Young people complete domestic tasks such as tidying their bedrooms, cooking and washing their own clothes. Budgeting money is also supported with assistance and guidance from staff. Pathway planning is discussed during review meetings which young people take an active part in. Therefore, young people learn essential skills to develop independence through the support of the staff.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Staff are competent, trained and supported to care for young people with complex emotional and behavioural needs. Staff receive a comprehensive training programme which includes all mandatory aspects of their role. All care staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. This means that young people receive a high level of care by staff qualified to care, support and guide them during their placement at this home.

The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the ethos and practice of this setting and includes all information required under regulations. A guide, written in a style suitable for young people, is available and provides information about the running of the home. Young people said they have received this when they first arrived and

found it useful.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people gain from a staff team that considers their individual cultural backgrounds and responds to them effectively. Good, robust assessment of need is reflected in each young person's care plan. Staff promote a culture within this home of helping young people to live as normal a life as possible. For example, agreeing for friends to stay overnight. Young people's religious needs are met through supporting a young person to attend a Christian youth club. Staff consider the impact on gender issues within the home by ensuring that shifts are represented with both male and female staff on duty at all times.

There is regular monitoring through monthly visits from a senior member of the organisation who reports on the practice and record keeping within this home. Reports from these visits are available to staff. Young people are aware that they can discuss any issues or concerns with this visitor. Internal monitoring is, however, less frequent. For example, behaviour management records are not routinely signed off on a monthly basis. This means that trends or patterns of behaviour can not always be easily identified and acted upon.

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
26	ensure unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated with regards to the internal doors that if locked cannot be opened from the inside. (Regulation 23(c))	29/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children are actively discouraged from smoking (NMS 12.6)
- ensure that children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the home (NMS 16.1)
- ensure that individual files include an assessment on the risk of the potential for bullying behaviour (26.2)
- ensure electrical installations are checked at least every three years and boilers

- are maintained annually (NMS 26.4)
- ensure the registered person of the home monitors and signs the home's records at least once a month, to identify any patterns or issues requiring action. (NMS 33.1)