

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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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

This large Victorian house is within close proximity to a nearby town with good rail links and other local amenities. This is a six bedded home which is owned and managed by a local authority. The service is registered for five boys or girls. It is able to accommodate six children should a sibling group need this support. Siblings would be accommodated in the double bedroom and admission would be at the manager's discretion.

This home provides medium to long term care. The principles and values of this service are set out in the Statement of Purpose.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is an outstanding service which has developed significantly over recent years. Young people's holistic needs are assessed, planned and met by a dedicated and competent staff team. Young people enjoy a wide range of activities which are fun and challenging. Learning opportunities are purposeful and creative. Young people also say they feel safe at the home. The home works extensively with external professionals and agencies to achieve the best outcomes for young people. Staff and young people are supported through effective management systems. The quality of systems for planning, monitoring, evaluating and improving service provisions are such that promotes the welfare and diverse needs of young people and staff performance.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made as a result of the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy a wide selection of foods which are balanced and freshly prepared. Opportunities are created for young people to participate in menu planning and food preparation. These activities are appropriately supervised. Menus and recipes are retained and evaluated. These include foods from different cultures and countries. Young people say that they are encouraged to eat healthy meals. They also say that the food is of good quality.

Comprehensive systems are maintained for ensuring that young people's health needs are met. This includes robust procedures for planning, recording and monitoring young people's health, positive working relationships with external professionals and effective observations of young people's well being. The service is proactive in arranging appropriate therapy through services such as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), play therapy and counselling. The provisions for meeting young people's holistic needs are excellent. This includes emotional support, social development and attachment disorders.

Effective procedures are in place for the receipt, storage, administration, recording and disposal of medication. The monitoring of these procedures is thorough. All staff approved for administering medications are suitably trained. A high percentage of the staff team are also

trained in First Aid. Young people's individual health files are consistent and maintained to an exceptionally high standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from different levels of support regarding privacy, respect and dignity. All young people are accommodated in single bedrooms. House rules are in place for maximising young people's privacy at all times. Support for personal care tasks are carried out sensitively and appropriately. Good quality control systems are in place for the safeguarding of confidential information. This includes information stored electronically and staff training on data protection.

Young people are happy with the way in which their views and opinions are dealt with. Changes and developments are made as a result of listening to young people. The procedures for managing complaints and concerns are thorough. However, the numbers of complaints received are significantly low. Complaints representation for young people is extensive. This includes access to the local authority complaints department, an independent visitor and an independent advocacy service. The complaints procedure is presented to young people in a format suitable to their needs and understanding. Positive relationships are maintained with neighbours through routine visits. Outcomes of these visits are recorded and monitored.

Procedures for maximising young people's safety and protection are wide ranging. Staff demonstrate sound knowledge of safeguarding practices in relation to the assessed needs of individual young people. Child protection training and updated guidance on safeguarding is disseminated effectively and monitored at regular intervals. The high levels of staff, implementation of good quality care planning and individualised support are indicative of an environment which young people say makes them feel safe. External professionals describes safe caring strategies as being excellent including staff skills in anticipating and pre-empting difficult situations. Young people benefit from topics of debate and learning such as personal safety and stranger danger.

Bullying is not tolerated and approaches to promoting positive behaviours between young people are creative and imaginative. For example, anti-bullying is included in themed activities and projects. Detailed information on anti-bullying is accessible to staff. Young people also have access to details for contacting external agencies such as Child Line.

There are no concerns regarding young people absconding. Significant work is undertaken with young people to help them manage their feelings and emotions. This contributes to an environment which makes young people feel safe and secure.

Behavioural management procedures are extensive with remarkable outcomes for young people. This takes into account the emphasis on emotional well being, social skills and key aspects of nurturing young people in accordance with their assessed needs. The service continues to use Positive Options strategies for physical intervention. One member of staff is a Positive Options approved trainer. The numbers of restraint or incidents of physical intervention have dropped considerably since the last key inspection. The types of sanctions imposed are clearly documented and monitored. Young people say that rules are fair. Socially acceptable behaviours are also promoted through a well established rewards system. Documentation linked to behavioural management is written to an exceptionally high standard and monitored for effectiveness.

Vigorous procedures are in place for maintaining health and safety standards. This includes water safety checks, electrical checks, gas checks, visual checks of the premises, routine visits carried out by approved contractors and risk assessments. Young people, staff and visitors are protected from fire. Fire safety procedures are thorough and well recorded. There are no outstanding fire safety recommendations and fire safety equipment is located throughout the home. Fire drills are carried out regularly with young people throughout the year. At least two of these take place after dark and involves different scenarios. One recommendation made following the most recent food safety inspection has been implemented.

Comprehensive recruitment processes promotes the safety and protection of young people. This includes a careful selection process involving young people and vigorous vetting processes. The quality of recruitment records including the tracking of suitability checks is exceptional. Practical steps are taken to ascertain the suitability of visitors or adults involved with the care or welfare of young people who are not directly employed by the service. Visitors are managed appropriately.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of support given to young people individually and as a group is outstanding. The varying types of support are a top priority which are evidenced through robust care planning systems, monitoring and evaluation. These include social skills, maintaining positive friendships and emotional support strategies. Young people benefit immensely from a well established key worker system. Although this service is not registered as a therapeutic community, therapeutic techniques and strategies are reinforced through care planning and practice. The service is co-operative in implementing plans devised with assistance from external agencies and therapists.

All young people are in full time education. The home's contribution towards young people's education is unquestionable. This includes the types of support offered to young people at home and at school. Information regarding young people's education is maintained to a very high standard. Educational facilities are in line with young people's age, needs, interests and potential. The service is resourceful in facilitating and arranging for young people to engage in extra curricular activities and learning opportunities. These are linked to hobbies, leisure pursuits and local community affairs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are assessed effectively and comprehensively. Care plans and associated records are written and maintained to an exceptionally high standard. This includes the key elements including a placement plan, a 24 hour management plan, monthly summaries and daily observations. Risk assessments are robust and consistent with care plans. Vigorous monitoring systems are in place for ensuring that care plans are implemented appropriately. Where possible, young people are engaged in care planning activities. The criteria for care planning is wide ranging with a very clear emphasis on outcomes for young people.

The service is forward thinking with regards to the various types of reviews which takes place for each young person. Significant work is undertaken to support young people before, during and after reviews. In particular their emotional well being. Good quality reports are produced for review purposes. These are linked to various care planning records.

The support provided for young people to attend and maintain positive contact meetings with families and significant others is exemplary. This takes into account practical and emotional support. Detailed records are maintained and monitored for effectiveness and outcomes of contact meetings. Young people say they are satisfied with the support they receive for maintaining contact with family and friends.

Robust admissions and discharge procedures are in place and the needs of all young people are carefully considered. Discharge procedures are tailored and vary in accordance with the needs and arrangements for individual young people. These procedures are regularly evaluated for improvement. External professionals say that staff are skilled in supporting young people before and following admissions, particularly in dealing with sensitive matters and young people's emotional well being.

Young people's views and opinions are highly valued. Their contributions influence the operation of the home. For example, where possible, young people participate in recruitment processes. They are also consulted on key matters such as education, diet, learning opportunities, care planning and leisure activities. Outcomes of meetings are recorded and monitored. This includes house meetings and key worker meetings. Opportunities are created for enhancing young people's independence and to make everyday choices.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are engaged in a wide range of meaningful activities which would assist and prepare them for moving on. This includes opportunities to learn about the wider community, contact with different social groups and members of society, involvement in theme months and a range of citizenship projects. Independence training is linked to all aspects of care planning. External professionals describe the provisions of basic and practical care as being excellent.

Young people enjoy accommodation which is spacious, homely and well presented. Recent improvements include redecoration and replacement flooring. Good quality furniture is provided throughout. Communal provisions include a family room, play room, study, lounge and dining room. External provisions include an enclosed rear garden and additional space for recreational activities. Two separate sleep-in rooms are provided for staff. Property maintenance services are more effective which means that repair jobs and routine maintenance work are carried out more promptly. Young people say they are happy with their accommodation.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's Statement of Purpose accurately describes what the home sets out to do for young people it accommodates. This is also reflected in the Children's Guide. The information provided in both documents is comprehensive. In addition, a parents guide is also available. This exceeds the criteria as set out in the National Minimum Standard. All documents are reviewed and updated at least annually. The Statement of Purpose is formally approved by a representative for the registered provider.

Young people are supported by a competent and professional staff team. Staff representing the manager in their absence are suitably skilled with substantial experience. They demonstrate

a sound knowledge of the operating of the home and the confidence to support both staff and young people. The percentage of staff who have achieved an NVQ Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People or equivalent exceeds the National Minimum Standard. Young people benefit from the effectiveness of shift planning which is well planned. Staff and young people are supported by a management team who are well established and highly qualified with extensive experience.

Staffing resources are high and well managed. This is reflective of the wide range of tasks undertaken by staff to support young people in different situations whilst maintaining high levels of individualised care. It is also indicative of external services provided by staff such as 'outreach' support. The management team are committed to maintaining a staff team which is strong and consistent. In doing so, individualised support for staff is constructive and consistent. External professionals say that staff are good at bringing out the best in young people. They also say that staff are child centred in their approach.

The quality of training and development opportunities for staff are impressive and appropriate to core tasks and the needs of young people. Dedicated administrative staff coordinate all aspects of staff training. Training is directly linked to the ethos of the home and complex needs of young people. Staff are very positive and enthusiastic about the types of training available to them. This includes NVQ training, the foundation degree in therapeutic childcare and on going statutory training. All new staff benefit from a robust induction process which is linked to local, organisational and national initiatives. Arrangements for staff supervision and appraisals are consistent and comprehensive. Initiatives for developing and supporting the staff team are resourceful and encouraging. For example, a health check day has been arranged for the staff with the occupational health department, a mentoring scheme is in place for new staff and management support systems are in place regarding performance and development.

Vigorous processes are in place for monitoring the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose and quality of care. Significant work has been undertaken to develop these processes over recent years. A very comprehensive annual development plan is in place with an evaluation report of the previous year. All of the National Minimum Standards for children's homes are evaluated in this plan. The monitoring of records is exceptional and linked to a wide range of objectives and performance indicators.

Young people's files are maintained to a very high standard. Files are categorised and confidential information is stored appropriately. Procedural guidance is in place for accessing young people's files.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The admissions procedure takes into account the needs of all young people. This results in a well balanced service and safe environment for young people living in the home at any one time. Young people participate in a wide range of activities, social groups, learning opportunities and external initiatives to develop their knowledge and understanding of equality and diversity. This is facilitated in consultation with young people and in accordance with their levels of understanding, interests and assessed needs. In-house activities are innovative and stimulating. These are linked to meaningful outcomes such as anti bullying, social behaviours, local current affairs, diet and history. Outstanding work is maintained with regards to assessment, planning and reviewing the quality care. Business management systems are comprehensive and well resourced. This includes robust recruitment procedures and the promotion of equality and diversity through

staff training and development. For example, staff attend a drama workshop on equality and diversity as part of the induction process. The service is non complacent and always seeking to develop and improve outcomes for young people.

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):