

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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You can obtain copies of The Children Act 2004, Every Child Matters and The National Minimum Standards for Children's Services from: The Stationery Office (TSO) PO Box 29, St Crispins, Duke Street, Norwich, NR3 1GN. Tel: 0870 600 5522. Online ordering: www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

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 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 six boys or girls from the ages of six to under 14 at any one time. The service usually accommodates up to five boys or girls and the sixth admission would be at the manager's discretion. This ensures a balance in meeting the needs of existing young people and those referred to the service for potential placements.

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

Five children were resident at the time of this inspection but were away on a half-term break.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced interim inspection was primarily to assess the key standards under the Every Child Matters outcome area of staying safe. The implementation of three recommendations made at the last inspection was also evaluated.

There are a number of examples demonstrating how innovative and creative staff are in engaging the children in purposeful and meaningful activities. This includes 'themed' months and project work with visiting professionals. In addition, children are working towards a performance which will be staged at the home. The types of activities and projects enable the children to have fun. They also provide opportunities for children to learn more about themselves, the environment and various forms of safety.

Staff say: 'We are committed to putting children at the heart of what we do.' An example of this is identifying how to best support the children according to their needs and development. Staff say that teamwork is good and group dynamics are very supportive.

Although the children were not present, all staff spoke consistently about ways in which children are supported. Practice is continually monitored and evolving to create an environment for children where they can feel safe and receive diverse methods of support and intervention.

Two minor matters were identified for improving the detail of record keeping.

Overall, however, all records examined and discussions with staff, give very clear examples of how exemplary practice is achieved.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, three recommendations were made. All three have now been met. The quality of the sanctions record has improved. All sections are now being completed. In addition, one member of staff monitors the quality of this record to ensure that it is fully completed at all times.

Action has been taken to address one door which was being propped open. This practice is no longer happening. Staff were awaiting the outcome of an internal review and this has been achieved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The procedures in place for supporting children with personal care are consistent and closely monitored. Staff are proactive in developing strategies for supporting children as they develop and mature, particularly around matters such as privacy and body awareness. The communication with parents helps to strengthen how staff understand each child's needs and the support required. Where relevant, advice is sought from external professionals when engaging with children on matters relating to their privacy, development and personal care. This contributes to an environment where children learn about respect and dignity for themselves and others. Significant work is also being done to create children's awareness of sensitive and personal matters, and gender issues. For example, children are currently participating in a programme entitled 'Living and Growing' which covers a variety of topics.

A comprehensive complaints procedure is in place. There have been no external complaints since the last inspection. A child-friendly version of the complaints procedure is displayed vividly in the home. A dedicated record is kept of complaints received from the children. Completed records show that these matters are taken seriously and children's views and concerns are valued.

Extensive work is carried out for ensuring children's safety and protection. This is endorsed through the quality of records and monitoring processes in place. Staff are kept abreast of safeguarding practices and this is achieved through the provision of external training and in-house development opportunities. For example, staff are currently presenting a 'virtual' process to their colleagues on relevant policies in team meetings. Staff are motivated through this initiative and find it beneficial in keeping

up to date with practice.

Staff are creative in their approach for making children aware of unacceptable behaviours such as bullying. Countering bullying is integrated into a variety of projects, discussions and topical debates. In addition, bullying is discussed with children in their weekly meetings. The presentation of this topic and the language used is relevant to the children's age, understanding and needs. Children are currently engaged in projects and debates with external agencies and professionals who visit the home to address a wide range of topics. This includes bullying behaviour. Staff report that children are showing a keen interest in these visits and are eager to participate in the activities.

Currently, there are no issues regarding children being absent without authority. This standard was assessed in detail at the key inspection and was therefore not assessed on this inspection.

Behavioural management systems are robust and thoroughly scrutinised by management to ensure that agreed strategies are effective in practice. Sanctions imposed are evaluated over time, and where appropriate, alternative ways of engaging with children are implemented to reinforce acceptable and positive behaviours. Established links with external therapists are having a positive impact on children's behaviours. As a result, more therapeutic approaches are being used to help children overcome the need to exhibit their feelings through anger. Staff report that the use of restraint is a last resort and only used to protect the child and others. Staff are kept up to date on the home's methods of intervention by attending annual refresher training. In-house coordinators are also accessible to staff regarding the use of restraint and other forms of intervention. The overall quality of restraint records is excellent. Individual records give a clear account of the incident, methods of intervention and sequence of events. However, they do not distinguish when a hold is intermittent in relation to the full duration of intervention.

Fire safety systems are sound. In addition to routine checks carried out by external contractors, staff also carry out a range of in-house checks. These include the routine testing of fire call points and regular visual checks. The visual checks take into account a range of fire safety measures. Swift action is also taken in response to any faults identified. Staff and children take part in regular fire drills. The frequency is almost monthly and this exceeds the national minimum standard. The types of drill vary and include scenarios and later times of the day. The majority of records include the time of each drill but there are some recent entries where this has not been recorded.

No new staff have been appointed since the last inspection. This standard was assessed in detail at the key inspection and was therefore not assessed on this inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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 that the description in restraint records clearly describes the actual 'hold' in relation to the full duration of the incident (NMS 22)
- record the times of each fire drill. (NMS 26)