

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
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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 home provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people of either sex, aged from six years to 11 years. It is a home run by a local authority. The home is close to local amenities and public transportation is easily accessible from the home. The home is well resourced with a communal lounge, games room, dining area, kitchen, utility room and outdoor play area. At this time, the home is accommodating six young people. Five young people were present who contributed their views to the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this visit was to undertake a full unannounced inspection. The five Every child Matters outcomes were inspected: Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution and Achieving Economic Wellbeing as well as organisation.

The home prides itself on being a healthy home. There have been reports of weight reduction and positive behavioural changes as a result of a change in food preparation, and only healthy snacks being provided. The young people benefit from the home's consultation with the looked after children's nurse and a nutritionist.

Young people's welfare is safeguarded through good risk assessment and training for staff. Education and access to employment are being accessed by almost all of the young people, although attendance can be sporadic.

Arrangements for consultation and care planning are outstanding and young people are assisted in every way to make a positive contribution.

Shortfalls are identified in respect of staff recruitment files, namely the storage of some of this sensitive information, the last employer reference and clear records of suitability. There is no up-to-date certificate of the electrical installation for the home. Smoke seals are not present in all young people's bedroom doors. Special educational needs statements are not present in all cases.

The majority of key national minimum standards (NMS) are generally met and some are exceeded. The service has more strengths than weaknesses overall.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no requirements or recommendations at the time of the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home provides a healthy nutritious and balanced diet to the young people and this is clearly evidenced in the menus for the home. No crisps, biscuits or fizzy drinks are purchased. Young people are encouraged to spend their pocket money on such items. Healthy snacks such as fresh fruit, dried fruit and prepared vegetables with healthy dips are provided. All staff have attended food hygiene training and the home is in the process of all staff undertaking an accredited nutrition course which also includes making meals from basic healthy ingredients and reducing the fat and salt intake of the young people resident. The home has regular contact with a nutritionist who has been consulted about the menus. The home follows the 'healthy homes' policy in practice and young people's diets have improved as a result.

Staff encourage a healthy lifestyle through regular discussion and taking part in activities such as cycle riding, walking access to sports and leisure facilities. Young people who smoke are discouraged from doing so through the supervision of pocket monies and encouragement to engage with a smoking cessation programme. Health planning is excellent, all appointments and outcomes are clearly recorded in individual young people's files. Staff present as good role models in actively engaging the young people. Routine medical, optical and dental appointments are organised by key workers. The young people are made aware of the arrangements for their health care. Questionnaires returned by the young people confirm that staff look after them when they are ill. Statutory medical examinations are organised.

The management storage and administration of medicines is outstanding. Written medical consent to first aid and medication is present within young people's files. There are regular audits of both prescribed and homely remedies in the home. The looked after children's nurse has been consulted about these arrangements. Medication is clearly labelled and well accounted for in the detailed records maintained by the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people confirm that their bedrooms are a private place and their locks are in working order. Young people have mobile telephones and the home provides £10 credit each month, in addition the home has a cordless handset upon which young people can make and receive calls in private. Information in relation to the young people and permanent staff is stored and dealt with in confidential manner, however some staff information is stored on a shelf in one of the offices.

Arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying, absence and behaviour management are handled very well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. No concerns were highlighted throughout the course of this

inspection by the young people. There have been some inconsistencies in the signing of sanctions records by young people. Risk assessments are produced to highlight concerns and vulnerability of the young people at the home. Behaviour management plans are produced to support staff practice. Staff have proved to be competent between inspections in supporting the young people's needs.

Accurate records are maintained showing the home is managed well, providing suitable physical safety and security for the young people resident. Fire drills and checks of equipment are conducted regularly. At the time of this inspection the certificate of maintenance to the electrical installation has expired. A deputy manager reports that the manager is in the process of trying to resolve this matter. Some of the smoke seals are not present in respect of several young people's bedrooms. There are a number of risk assessments in relation to individual young people, staff roles and areas of the home. These are regularly reviewed to ensure that staff, young people and the home are safe.

Much work has taken place in respect of obtaining the required information in respect of staff files, on the whole the staff information is good. One shortfall identified at the time of this inspection is in respect of references. In one case a reference supplied is not from the last employer. The home does not have copies of the Criminal Record Bureau disclosures. There is a cover sheet at the front of the file that notes the date and number of the disclosure and whether or not there are any offences. This pro-forma does not indicate whether or not information has come to light in respect of an applicant's suitability, and the check with the Independent Safeguarding Authority, although it is reported that if any information is disclosed then this would be recorded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people have access to people independent of the home for support. They are making good progress as a result of the level of individual support they receive from committed staff and independent persons, all of whom are supported by the management team. Young people have their own key worker. Meetings between key workers and young people take place at regular intervals.

The home has a very proactive approach to helping young people progress and to achieve their potential. Formal education and preparation for employment is considered to be an integral part of this process; although attendance can be sporadic. All the young people of school age living at the home attend school, access to employment courses or are waiting to start school. Young people have good pupil education plans, however special needs statements are not always present. There is evidence that this information has been pursued.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Placement plans are comprehensive and include all of the information required to care for the young people on a day to day basis. The plan is produced in conjunction with the placing authority's placement plan, discussion with the young people, and where appropriate parents. Cultural, religious and behavioural needs are identified and met. A key working system ensures that these plans are implemented. Regular key working sessions are being undertaken. These are recorded and reflect the achievements and ongoing individual needs of the young people.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with their families so that they are able to sustain important relationships, and family and friends are welcomed into the home.

Policies and procedures are followed in relation to any admissions or discharges to and from the home. Consideration is given to any likely impact this may have on young people or the resident group, through the introduction of pre-admission risk assessments.

Young people are routinely consulted about day to day matters, as well as more formally in their care planning and young people's meetings, which are now held monthly. A variety of matters discussed include activities, bus passes, school holidays, moving bedrooms, bullying, equality and diversity, cooking and baking, menus, going into bedrooms, noise at night, hygiene, smoking, rights and responsibilities, transport, incentives, borrowing and lending.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported with planning for independence. They are enabled to be involved in planning, shopping and cooking their own meals, and are provided with good support to develop all their skills to promote their independence. Young people who are of an age whereby assessment and planning are appropriate, have pathway plans in place.

The overall appearance of the home is good. Care and attention has been paid to young people's bedrooms, they are clean, highly personalised and have fitted wardrobes installed which ensures there is plenty of storage. Young people have been involved in re-decorating their bedrooms. Some of the smoke strips are missing on the bedroom doors. Communal areas of the home are spacious and appropriately furnished. The hallways of the home are currently being prepared for decoration and the gloss paintwork is complete. There are plans and funding in place to convert the downstairs toilet so that it allows for disabled access.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people are provided with a guide to the home that provides information about the home and what it will be like living there. The home has a Statement of Purpose that details the aims and objectives of the home, facilities and staffing, and how the home intends to meet the needs of the young people. This document is kept under review and made available to placing social workers, parents and staff.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home operates in a way which recognises the uniqueness of individual young people. Care and support is specifically tailored to reflect this. Staff have undertaken training and there are resources in the home to undertake individual work with young people to develop their awareness of such matters.

Consistency of care is provided to young people and there are clear arrangements in place for members of staff to deputise in the absence of the manager. The home's rotas ensure that, where possible, there is always a mix of both male and female staff on duty. Staff sickness and holidays are covered by existing staff members being flexible in their work patterns.

Young people receive the care and services they need from caring competent staff. All permanent members of staff are trained to a minimum national vocational qualification at level three in caring for children and young people. Senior staff have the same qualification to level four. One of the deputies is currently undertaking a social work degree, with support from the authority. Staff take part in induction and mandatory training have also had access to equality and diversity, managing sexually harmful behaviour, child sexual exploitation, restorative justice, child exploitation online protection, nutrition and healthy choices.

The management team at this home has established some good operational systems and regularly monitor and evaluate practice. Regulation 34 checks are regularly undertaken and highlight any shortfalls and the remedial action necessary to rectify such shortfalls.

The young people's files clearly record needs, development and progress; and records reflect their individuality. They are accessible and stored in a confidential manner.

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
27	ensure that staff files contain a reference from their most recent employer and that there is a clear record of their suitability check (Regulation 26 and Schedule 2 (3))	07/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all staff information is stored in a confidential manner (NMS 27)
- ensure that any damage to the doors smoke seals are replaced where necessary in consultation with the fire officer (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that electrical installations and equipment are checked at least every three years (NMS 26.4)
- ensure all young people who have special educational needs have a copy of their statement on their file (NMS 14.2)