

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Martha Nethaway
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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

The home is managed and run by the local authority. It provides residential care for six young people aged between 10 and 17 years. Five young people were living at the home at the time of the inspection and two young people participated in the inspection. The aim of the home is to provide emotional and psychological support for young people so that they may return to their birth family, move to foster care, or develop skills to live independently in the community. The home is a large, refurbished detached house, providing spacious communal facilities. Private garden areas are situated to the front and rear of the property. Ground floor accommodation comprises of two lounges, a dining room, a kitchen, and a craft room. The office is situated across a courtyard in a separate building. On the first floor there are six single bedrooms and two bathrooms. Local facilities in the town centre are accessible including shops, parks and clubs.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This inspection was an unannounced visit. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were assessed.

The overall quality rating is good. Young people are receiving good quality care, support and guidance. Young people's opportunities for good health are well supported. Young people are achieving their potential and are being consulted about decisions that affect them.

As a result of this inspection visit, there are three actions being set. The first relates to providing all staff with up-to-date training on the safe handling of medication. The second is to improve the quality of the recruitment records and address minor administrative oversights. Finally, to improve the level of monitoring at the home so that it reaches a high standard consistently and this is specifically related to ensuring that staff meetings are taking place on a regular basis.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in March 2010 the home was required to improve how physical interventions are being recorded. This has now been addressed. The home has changed the format which meets all of the requirements. The home was also asked to review the fire risk assessment and this has been completed. Finally, the home has improved its structure and systems to ensure the risk assessments are regularly reviewed for all young people. Through addressing these actions the management

team at the home have demonstrated their commitment to promoting the welfare of young people at the home while continuing to improve and adapt the quality of the records at the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people's emotional, physical and mental needs are being identified through the access of appropriate advice and support designated to meet their needs. All young people are registered with their local doctor, dentist and optician. One member of staff commented, 'the home ensures that young people's immediate health care needs are being dealt with quickly'. Staff understand the importance and the value of ensuring that young people are growing up to be emotionally and physically healthy. Young people are provided with direct access to child and adolescent mental health services. Staff ensure that they talk to young people about sexual health, alcohol and smoking so that young people can build positive relationships and make informed choices about their futures.

Young people's health needs are met and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment. Young people's medication records show that staff follow the home's stated policies. However, staff medication training is not up to date and this has the potential to compromise the good work that takes place in relation to how staff work within the scope and boundaries of their role in relation to the administration of medication. The Registered Manager recognises that this is a gap in the procedures and is currently addressing this matter with the local authority training department.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals. Young people are asked about their preference and because of this they contribute to the weekly food menu. Young people's meals are freshly prepared and good quality seasonal food is provided. Meals reflect different cultures and staff have discussions about the consequences of a poor diet with young people. Young people are encouraged to prepare simple snacks and drinks. Young people also have access to foods between mealtimes. Young people's mealtimes are sociable as they share them with staff and peers.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a safe environment. This is because the home has in place effective policies that promote the welfare of young people and are consistently implemented.

Young people's right to privacy is recognised because staff clearly raise awareness so that privacy, dignity and choice is preserved. This protects the interest of young people because staff consistently follow the home's policy.

Young people are provided with good information about how to make a complaint. Complaints about staff working with young people are acted upon. Staff at the home show a professional approach that is sensitive and shows that all feedback is welcomed. Staff put right what has gone wrong.

Staff know and understand their role to promote and protect the welfare of young people at all times. This includes how to recognise and raise safeguarding and welfare concerns related to young people. Staff work effectively within the multi-disciplinary approach and record and share information on young people at risk. All staff have received child protection and safeguarding training and this means that their knowledge and understanding of best practice is current.

Young people who are absent without authority are protected in accordance with written guidance and are responded to positively on return. Staff help to educate young people about their risky behaviours and tackle targeted concerns. As a result, young people who are absent without authority is being reduced.

Staff understand that young people are vulnerable to bullying. Any incidents of bullying are taken seriously and dealt with immediately. This includes monitoring on a day-to-day basis through key workers sessions, staff team meetings and staff supervisions. Because of this, young people understand the anti-bullying ethos of the home.

Young people learn to socialise and become responsible by listening to staff who provide fair and consistent ground rules. Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour. All staff are trained in the use of physical intervention but the use of this is relatively low. Similarly, the use of sanctions is used sparingly.

Health and safety is given a good priority by the home because there are comprehensive health and safety procedures and an associated health and safety check list. All young people have individualised risk assessments which are reviewed as circumstances change. As a result, young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. Young people are further protected because they are encouraged to participate in regular fire evacuations and this means they know what steps to taken in the event of an emergency. In addition, fire safety checks are being completed with due diligence.

The recruitment and selection of staffing records was checked at this inspection visit. All the required checks are being completed in relation to checks on identity, previous employment history, references and enhanced criminal records bureau checks. There was just one anomaly where the references are not always being dated. This is because the home's pro forma does not naturally prompt the date to be completed. This is a minor administrative issue and the home is taking action to correct this immediately.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff understand that positive consistent relationships with young people are critical to help develop their self-esteem and a sense of stability to foster trust. All young people are given individualised support planned with their needs and wishes and young people identified as having particular needs receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested. Young people have supportive relationships with at least one adult in the home. For example, all young people are allocated a key worker who spends good quality time and takes time to advocate on their behalf. Young people's achievements are celebrated and recognised by staff.

Education of young people is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. All young people are in full time education which includes mainstream education. Young people are achieving well and staff have effective working relationships with young people's schools and their social workers. This means that staff recognise young people's achievements which includes academic success, improvements with behaviour, participation and attendance at school.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's admissions to the home are in line with the local authority admissions procedures for group home living. Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Where it is appropriate young people with their social worker can visit the home prior to admission. Staff are skilled and sensitive in helping young people to settle once the placement at the home is considered the best option to meet the needs of the young person.

Young people have their needs assessed and written placement plans outline how these needs will be met and implemented. Young people in the home are appropriately placed there. All young people have a detailed and personalised placement plan that clearly explains what their presenting needs are and how staff will aim to meet these. Records reflect a good understanding of issues related to health, welfare, safety, education and complex high level needs. There is a sufficient focus on the intended outcomes for young people. One member of staff commented, 'this gives a complete picture of the young people so that placement stability which includes appropriate response and decision making can be achieved'.

Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in light of their care and progress at the home. Young people know about their rights in care because staff hold regular discussions. Young people are encouraged to take an active part in their reviews in relation to future plans and how they can influence them. They can share their views through consultation documents about their experiences of the home and similarly can confidently share this verbally with their social worker.

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. All young people are encouraged to maintain appropriate contact as directed by the social worker and the local authority. Staff maintain good clear records about what levels of contact that have been agreed. Staff are very sensitive and will provide any necessary practical support with transport, venues and also visits to the young person's home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. Staff aim to hold meetings every two weeks but this can be delayed if young people are very busy and unable to attend the meetings due to other commitments. Records show lively discussions about group living matters and staff show a positive and professional response to any issues that are raised.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has good systems in place to help young people who are leaving children's services and moving into supported lodgings or independent accommodation. The home has an established relationship with the leaving team so that life skills and independent living skills assessment and development plan can begin as soon as practicable. Staff are required to provide direct work with young people on specific areas; for example: helping young people to manage budgets, learning key social skills and practical independent skills such as paying bills, shopping, cooking and using public transport. This means that young people will be able to build on the key skills for independent and satisfying lives.

Young people enjoy spacious accommodation which is decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people can choose the décor for their bedrooms. There is ample communal space for the number of young people accommodated. Staff have separate sleep-in facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The leadership and management of the home is good. The Registered Manager is experienced, qualified and ensures that the home provides good quality care and the staff team are ably led. The deputy manager manages the home effectively when the Registered Manager is absent. Young people get the best possible care and this helps to increase positive outcomes.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are in well managed placements where staff have access to support and training so that young people's needs can be met. Young people's cultural, religious and language needs are addressed. The home is committed to play its part in delivering good quality care

where equality, diversity and human rights are embraced by everyone.

Young people are guided through and know what services they can expect from the home, how they will be cared for and who they are likely to share with, and a clear statement of how the home operates is available for parents and others needing this information.

Young people receive the care and services they need from competent staff. The staffing arrangements at the home meet the needs of young people. Staff are well-trained and experienced. The majority of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3. Since the last inspection, the home has changed the staff rotas. The aim is to increase effective and efficient management of the staffing resources. The home has improved sickness monitoring because staff are required to complete return to work interviews. There is a formal process now in place to monitor and improve this area within the home.

The home has in place a system to monitor the performance of the home. This includes internal in-house monitoring completed by the Registered Manager and external monitoring by a visiting senior manager once a month. The Registered Manager completes a formal written audit of all the checks completed and takes action to address any shortfalls. However, there is evidence that staff meetings are not taking place regularly. This has the potential risk to affect the level of communication and compromise the consistency with staff working practice. At present staff rely heavily on handover between shifts and the staff communication book.

Young people's case records are clear, accurate, comprehensive and up to date. This is because the staff at the home have significantly improved the detail of the record keeping. All young people's records are kept in a safe and secure manner so that personal data is protected.

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
13	make suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping and safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the children's home, this refers to the need to review the arrangements for staff training in this area (Regulation 21(1))	28/02/2011

27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in regulation. (Regulation 26)	28/02/2011
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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):

- ensure that that staff meetings occur at least monthly. (NMS 28.10)