

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
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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

The home is situated in a quiet residential area and accommodates up to four young people between the ages of 11 and 17 years. The home is close to a park, education and leisure facilities. There are also convenient rail and road links into the city centre.

Accommodation is on three floors. The ground floor has the kitchen, dining room, living room and the office. The first floor has two bathrooms and three bedrooms, one of which is the staff sleep in room. On the second floor there are two more bedrooms and a bathroom. In addition, there is a living area with kitchenette on the second floor which is intended to be used for young people preparing for independence.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected.

This is an outstanding service that provides young people with a safe home to live where they can develop their potential. The commitment to equality and diversity is excellent.

Facilities are provided to support young people to live a healthy lifestyle. Staff actively support young people to take care of their personal health. There is a passion amongst staff for continual excellence in their work with the young people. A range of outside agencies are used to provide additional support to assist young people as they progress towards independence. Safeguarding is taken seriously and there are clear procedures in place to enable staff to respond to any concerns. The home offers young people with positive support to achieve their educational potential, although this commitment is not always reciprocated by educational services.

The home is well managed and staff are supported by the management team in their work to improve the lives of the young people. There is a positive culture at this home and staff demonstrate a passionate commitment to their work on behalf of the young people.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The young people enjoy a wide variety of meals and staff ensure that these are nutritionally balanced. The menus are chosen by the young people themselves and these are representative of the cultural background of the young people living at the home. Visits to cultural restaurants and themed meals are popular with the young people. This is intended to introduce the young people to food from other countries and to broaden their awareness of different cultures. Healthy eating is a strong feature at the home and staff ensure that meals are an important part of their work to encourage a healthy lifestyle. This approach, not only teaches the young people the value of good health, but also enhances their understanding of diversity.

All the young people are registered with the local health services and where required, they are supported by community health specialist services. This is to meet any particular health care need such as drugs advice, smoking and personal issues. Staff are aware of the need to manage health care matters with sensitivity given the cultural background of some young people. The health records of the young people are clear and indicate how any needs will be met. There is scarcity of information from those young people who are classed as asylum seeking. Nevertheless, staff working with the Looked After Children's Nurse ensure that all young people have their health care needs monitored. The home encourages the young people to adopt a healthy lifestyle and support is provided through gym membership and participation in sporting activities. Where appropriate the Looked After Children's Nurse can provide confidential advice and guidance on sexual health and relationship matters. This ensures that young people receive confidential and professional guidance to promote their health.

The home has a robust medicines administration system in operation. Only staff who have been trained are authorised to administer medicines. Parental consents are in place and all medicines prescribed for young people are kept in secure cabinets. Medicine records are appropriately maintained. Staff are trained in first aid and there is always a trained member of staff on duty.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy and dignity are actively promoted and staff are very clear about the need to respect the right of young people to have private time alone. All the young people have keys to their bedrooms where they can be alone if they choose. This approach is sensitively balanced with the need for staff to ensure the safety of the young people by knowing the whereabouts of the young people the home. An integral part of safeguarding is the secure storage of information concerning the young people. All records are maintained in the office which is locked at all times. Staff are clear about their responsibilities in respect of confidentiality. Training in confidentiality is provided for all new staff as part of their induction training.

Information is readily available in the home for young people to make a formal complaint and details of outside support services are found on the young people's information board. The complaints procedure can be used at any time and a written response is provided by the investigating manager to the complainant. However, the trend is for young people to raise any concerns informally with staff. They will attempt to resolve issues through discussion rather than use the formal process. Young people are nevertheless, clearly aware that they can raise a complaint using the formal route at any time, and are confident that it will be positively responded to.

Safeguarding is taken very seriously by staff and training in child protection is mandatory. Procedures are well established and professional links are in place with the local authority safeguarding service. Staff have a very clear understanding of the procedures. They ensure that young people who are new to living in the United Kingdom, are given specific advice and guidance about the risks they may face within the local community. This is very good practice and demonstrates staff commitment to ensuring the safety of the young people. Information is readily available in the home for young people about the variety of agencies that can be contacted if they have any safeguarding concerns. All these measure promote the safety of the young people.

Staff are alert to the risk of bullying taking place due to the cultural mix of the young people living at the home. Any incidents are managed appropriately and work takes place with the perpetrator in order to encourage them to change their ways. Discussions between the victim and the bully is the preferred strategy rather than the imposition of a sanction. This approach is carried out in a calm reflective way and has a greater success rate than using a confrontational approach. The young people are confident with this approach. This is very good practice.

There is a procedure and a police protocol in place to deal with young people are reported as missing. Records indicate that the most common incidents concern young people not returning to the home at the agreed time. Staff work with the young people to change their behaviour and instil an awareness of the risk they put themselves, when out in the community.

Although trained in restraint techniques, staff rarely use these methods to manage behaviour. Discussion and dialogue is more commonly used and this demonstrates a positive approach by staff. Where appropriate, staff give high levels of praise to any improvement in behaviour. Young people are set targets and rewards are given if changes are made in the way they behave. Certificates are also given for good behaviour. This approach works well.

The home provides the young people with a safe place to live. Health and safety is very well managed and all fire safety requirements are met. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and these cover activities as well as individual assessments for young people. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to ensure that the home is maintained in a safe condition. Any repairs are dealt with speedily.

The safeguarding of the young people is enhanced through a robust recruitment and selection procedure. All appropriate checks are carried out before appointments are confirmed. During the recruitment process, the young people are actively involved in meeting potential staff. Their views are given to the staff appointment panel and this influences the final choice. This is very good practice.

Safeguarding practice at the home are excellent and this is an environment where young people live in safety.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Support for the young people is excellent. The home operates a key worker system. This member of staff is responsible for ensuring that young people receive support and guidance, to enable them to benefit from the positive care and support provided within the home and from outside agencies. A key feature, is the positive approach demonstrated by staff, to ensure that young people receive support and appropriate resources, that will assist them as they prepare for independence. Staff have access to a variety of support resources based in the community that will benefit young people. These range from personal health, sexual identity, keeping safe in the community, employment. The home actively supports young people to follow their religion and this is enhanced by the staff ensuring that young people know where to access support from their cultural community.

Education of the young people is actively promoted at the home. This is regarded as an important part of the planning for independence. Young people when they first move into the home, generally have low attendance record at school. The young people currently resident, have

clearly benefited from the strong support from staff and improvements are clearly evident. The home has developed an educational resources pack that is used during the school day for those young people not attending full time education. In addition, staff will take young people out on educational visits to museums and places of interest within the local area. Use is made of the internet to support educational activity during the day. However, this is reliant on the professional commitment of staff. Planned educational work programmes from the educational service is less evident. Where English is not a young person's first language, staff will provide valuable support to help the young people to improve their basic English. This is excellent practice.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The young people have a set of comprehensive records that indicate the assessments that have taken place at the home. These provide a clear indication of their care needs and the strategies required to meet these needs. Each placement plan is regularly reviewed in line with regulations. The young people are positively supported and encouraged to play an active role in all their reviews, and where required interpreters will be provided. Young people are confident that their views are appropriately represented. Staff work in partnership with the young people, to ensure that they own their plan and if any changes are required, then they are key to any decisions made. This is excellent practice.

Contact with families is actively supported if this is part of a care plan. Support is provided by staff to ensure that relationships with family are maintained as an important link for the young person. Support is also provided to accompany a young person if necessary, even though this role is the responsibility of the young person's social worker. This is an indication of the professional commitment of staff at the home.

Staff work to ensure that young people moving into the home are treated with sensitivity and this process is managed carefully. There is a clear recognition that it is a stressful and emotional time for the young person. Introductions are planned and those living in the home are involved in planning for the admission. A similar sensitive approach is taken when young people are planning to move out of the home. Staff are proactive in ensuring that appropriate agencies are involved in the process.

Young people are encouraged to have a positive stake in the life of the home. Their views are actively sought and valued. Staff stated 'the views of the young people are vital to the success of the home, we need to know what they think of us and the care we provide'. Young people contribute to the life of the home through house meetings where a variety of topics can be discussed. Young people said, 'they are good at letting us sound off at meetings if we are unhappy about something'. Consultation is further enhanced by a questionnaire given to young people every quarter. The results are analysed and shared among staff and young people. This is very good practice. These measures enhance the confidence of the young people to share in the life of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Support for young people planning to move towards independence is excellent. There is a positive emphasis on ensuring that young people are fully prepared for the move from the

home. Young people play a key role in this process and they are expected to engage with staff in learning how to manage budgets, going shopping, payment of bills, dealing with statutory agencies. The input to the process of planning for independence, is thorough and staff invest a great deal of energy into this process. Extensive use is made of the various support and advice services within the community. The Independent Lifestyle Plan for each young person clearly records what work is required to prepare them for independence. The plan is regularly updated with the young person's involvement in all decisions made. This ensures that young people are aware of their plans. It is evident that the staff at the home, play a key proactive role in the preparations for independence planning.

The home is well maintained and comfortably furnished throughout. Young people have their own bedrooms which they are encouraged to personalise to suit their preferences. The lounge has a television and good quality furnishings where young people can meet and socialise. A computer is available for young people to use the internet. Appropriate systems are installed to prevent access to unauthorised sites.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff demonstrate a positive approach to equality and diversity through their work with the young people. The ethos of the home, is respect for each other regardless of cultural or religious background. Young people are encouraged to learn about the diverse cultures that exist in the local community. Themed meals are regularly enjoyed by the young people to introduce them to different cultures and these are very popular occasions. Young people are supported to follow their religious beliefs and any specialist diets are catered for. A strong feature at this home is the open culture, whereby staff discuss with young people issues such as racism and bullying if these become evident. Young people are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the home through house meeting, meal preparation, planning trips to places of interest and full involvement in all planning decisions about their future. All these measure promote the awareness and confidence of the young people as they prepare to take their place in the wider community.

The statement of purpose clearly sets out what the home provides for the young people who are placed there. Staff spend time explaining to them about life in the home and what is expected of them. They also point out, that young people have the right to be cared for in a safe environment and to be treated with respect.

The staff team are committed to high standards of care for the young people and they demonstrate a passion for their work. It is clearly evident that through strong leadership from the manager, staff are encouraged to develop their professional skills through the training programme provided by the company. New staff are required to complete the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) induction training. Following this, new staff are required to enrol on the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 training in the Care of Children and Young People. There is a commitment from the company to provide ongoing training and development opportunities for staff. This promotes the safety and well being of the young people who are cared for by trained and competent staff.

There are excellent systems in place to monitor the operation of the home. These include monthly statutory inspections and quarterly audits by the regional manager. In addition, the management team at the home meet weekly to discuss operational matters. These processes

ensure that if any issues are identified, appropriate actions will be raised in order to bring about relevant changes and improvements. This ensures that the home continues to operate efficiently to meet the needs of the young people.

The records maintained on each young person are very informative and organised in a way that enables access to information easy to navigate. This is a reflection on the efficient way the home operates. There is evidence to indicate that files are kept up to date with relevant information demonstrating progress made by young people. Young people are encouraged to read their files and to make any appropriate additions or amendments.

This home is very well managed and is operating at a level which supports young people and promotes their safety and wellbeing.

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):

- ensure that children of compulsory school age who are not in school (or a pupil referral unit), the registered person has in place an educational programme during normal school hours; and works with the placing authority to secure appropriate full-time educational provision. (NMS 14.7)