

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 situated in a 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 young people's bedrooms are located on two floors where there are appropriate bathing and toilet facilities in close proximity. A games room is on the first floor where young people can enjoy pool, television and electronic games linked to the television.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this unannounced inspection all key standards were inspected.

The young people are very well cared for by staff who have a positive focus on their safeguarding responsibilities and who ensure that they work positively to promote equality and diversity. This is a strong feature at this home.

Strong links have been established with external agencies to promote the health and education of the young people. This is enhanced through the support and encouragement provided to them to lead healthy lifestyles and to achieve positive outcomes from their experience at the home.

Staff work well as a team to ensure that the safety of the young people is at the forefront of the activity at the home. There is an enthusiasm among staff for the young people to improve their life opportunities during their time at the home.

This is a service that values the contribution that young people can make to the life of the home. It is a very well managed service.

Improvements since the last inspection

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

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home encourages healthy living among the young people. Fresh fruit is freely available at all times. A qualified nutritionist is consulted on a regular basis to advise on the nutritional value of the meals provided. This is excellent practice. Themed meal nights are a regular feature at the home where different cultural dishes are served. These are enjoyable occasions that introduce the young people to other cultures and where discussions take place about the country concerned. These meals generally have a healthy approach to include, salads, rice, pasta and non red meats. This is also an excellent example of the positive line taken at the home in respect of equality and diversity.

Individual health needs are clearly identified in case files. This information is recorded for each young person detailing how their specific and general health issue are to be addressed. If specialist medical resources are required, staff ensure that the appropriate health professionals are notified. There are excellent links established with various health service providers. These include the looked after children's nurse, drugs service and the 'child and adolescent mental health services' (CAMHS). Through these positive links staff secure access to resources for young people. This is excellent practice. Staff actively encourage and support the young people to take an interest in looking after their health through taking part in various physical activities. These include, horse riding, ice skating, swimming, walks in the countryside, cave exploration and sporting activities. The home has an agreement with the local council which enables the young people to use council owned leisure facilities free of charge. The home clearly takes a holistic approach to encouraging the young people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

The home has a medicines policy, procedure and practice guidance which all staff have access to. Staff are trained in medicines administration. Medications are safely stored and administered. Clear records are kept on all medicines brought into the home and a well-established stock control and disposal system is in place. All staff are trained in first aid and in dealing with minor accidents and illnesses. The young people's health needs are very well met and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are sensitive to young people's rights to their privacy. Young people have access to their own bedrooms where they can be alone and they each have a key to their room. There is an efficient administration system in operation and all records are stored in secure conditions. Staff demonstrate a positive awareness of the importance of ensuring the confidentiality of information at the home.

There is a complaints procedure in place and the young people are confident about

raising any concerns with staff. Young people are aware of how to make a formal complaint and the information is available around the home. The young people's information booklet has clear guidance on how to make a complaint in user-friendly language. There are good links with the local children's rights service who can be contacted to support young people during a complaint investigation. This is very good practice.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of practice at the home. Staff are well trained in child protection awareness and they are required to undergo regular update training to ensure that they are competent to manage any safeguarding situation. In addition, safeguarding is a standard agenda item at each staff meeting to ensure that the profile of safeguarding remains high. The manager has established a learning culture at the home whereby information from national safeguarding events or enquiries is evaluated at staff meetings. Safeguarding is further enhanced through staff dialogue with young people about their personal safety out in the local community.

One young person said they feel safe in the home and confirmed that bullying is dealt with by staff. There is excellent information available for staff on the management of bullying situations. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for those young people who are identified as bullies. The restorative justice method is used at the home whereby the perpetrator is faced with the consequences of their actions. This is the preferred method rather than resorting to sanctions. Staff have a good understanding of bullying and they work proactively with the young people concerned to bring about a positive outcome for all parties.

There are procedures in place to deal with situations if a young person is missing. Staff have a clear understanding of the actions to take in these situations. Each young person has an individual risk assessment relating to the risk of absconding. Excellent links have been established with the local police and a protocol has been developed. This is to ensure support for the young person and to promote their safety.

Staff base their work with the young people on the development of trust and respect. In situations where tensions or difficult behaviour are evident, staff work to de-escalate the problem. There is a positive emphasis at the home on maintaining a friendly environment. Therefore, although all staff are trained in restraint techniques, it is rarely used and this is confirmed by the young people. Staff are nevertheless, required to undergo restraint refresher training annually. The use of restraint and sanctions are appropriately recorded. The young people feel that staff apply sanctions fairly.

The physical safety of the young people is a high priority and effective systems are in place to manage health and safety. Fire evacuation drills are carried out in line with requirements and all appliances have been properly checked by the appropriate contractors. The home has good quality doors and locks to prevent unauthorised entry and all windows have restrictors.

A strong feature at the home is the new robust staff selection and recruitment

system currently in operation. All applicants are required to undergo a rigorous full day assessment process. This involves applicants being assessed through written tests. They are observed during a shift at the home to ensure that they are appropriately motivated and suited to work with young people who display behavioural and emotional challenges. All required checks are carried out on applicants before appointments are confirmed. A positive feature is the active involvement of young people in this process and their views are an integral part of the final decisions on who to appoint. This is an excellent example of equality and diversity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The support given to the young people is excellent. Their key worker is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of care and support are provided. They spend quality time with the young people to support them with their plan and to achieve positive outcomes. Any extra support or resources are identified and the key worker will access these as required. The home has established very positive links with the various health care services. This ensures that young people can access appropriate health resources as required. This is excellent practice and demonstrates a positive approach to equality and diversity. Young people are actively encouraged to take part in physical activities and to pursue hobbies. The strong support given to the young people positively promotes their care and well-being.

There are effective links established with the local schools. Education is strongly supported and staff take a proactive approach to instilling the importance of this with the young people. In the event of a young person being excluded from school, staff negotiate with the school to plan the young person's return. During this process the young person is required to engage in educational related activities. This is excellent practice. During school hours, only educational related activities are permitted. A recent trip to Edinburgh involved the young people planning the whole event. They organised the purchase of train tickets, hotel booking, working to a set budget and researching on the internet places of interest to visit. The process involved use of maths, geography and computer skills. It additionally increased their self-confidence. Not only was this an excellent promotion of education but additionally demonstrated a positive approach to equality and diversity.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has a care plan that details how their needs are to be met by the home. Information in case files provides staff with a full background assessment of the young person. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that the plan is monitored and updated. Staff have a clear insight into the care needs of each of the young people including an awareness of cultural and diversity considerations. This ensures that the young people are supported at the home to achieve outcomes from

the care plan.

Statutory reviews are chaired by an independent reviewing officer. The young people are actively encouraged to participate in their reviews and to make a written contribution prior to the meeting. They are positively supported by their key workers to prepare for the review. Staff regard the involvement of young people in decisions made about them as important. Strong support is also given to young people to take a full and active part in the reviewing process. This is a clear demonstration of equality and diversity that stresses the importance of young people taking an active role in decisions about their lives.

Contact with families is strongly supported. A telephone is available in private for young people to use.

There is a careful and well planned admissions procedure that ensures young people and their families are consulted at all stages of the admission process. This is carried out at a sensitive pace to meet the needs of the young person concerned. The manager and a member of staff carry out an assessment visit to the young person's home to explain about the conditions of residence. When a young person initially takes up a place, they are given a welcome pack of information containing some gifts. A similar proactive approach is taken when a young person leaves the home. Staff encourage the young people to leave precious items in the security of the office and these are given back to the young person when they leave. A 'memories box' contains various other items of personal importance gathered during their time at the home.

The young people are encouraged to take an active part in the life of the home. They regularly meet with staff to plan activities and to discuss issues that affect them. Young people feel positive about being listened to by staff. If they want to raise an issue individually, they can speak to any member of staff in private. This is very good practice and ensures that young people feel confident that they are able to have their views heard. A survey questionnaire known as 'My View' is given to young people each month. This enables young people to give their opinion on a range of topics relating to life in the home. This is excellent practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide positive support for those young people who are preparing to move onto independent living. This work commences when the young people reach 15 years of age. They are introduced to taking a greater level of responsibility for themselves at an early stage in order to develop self-confidence and daily living skills. This is a clear demonstration of equality and diversity. An integral part of this preparation is for the young people to learn skills through taking part in tasks such as shopping for food, domestic skills, use of the washing machine, keeping their bedroom tidy, using public transport and learning about how to budget. Staff work with other professionals to ensure that a detailed plan is developed with the young

person, identifying what skills and support will be required. A very positive area to support young people to prepare for the world of work, involves staff teaching them how to conduct themselves at interviews. Staff set up mock interviews thereby exposing young people to the interview experience. This is excellent practice.

The home provides the children and young people with a safe and comfortable place to live. The children enjoy individual bedroom accommodation that is comfortably furnished. The bathroom and toilet facilities are situated close to the bedrooms. These are clean and well maintained. On the ground floor the large lounge is comfortably furnished with good quality seating and a modern plasma screen television. This room provides the young people with a very comfortable room to relax and socialise. A good size dining room provides the staff and young people with good quality furniture where they can enjoy meals. The kitchen is equipped with modern cooking facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff at this home actively enhances the potential of young people through positive support and encouragement. This enables young people to overcome the limitations of their social backgrounds. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness and insight into equality and diversity. This is clearly evident through their work with the young people and ensuring that they are able to follow their religion. Cultural meal requirements are met and religious events are celebrated involving all the young people. The young people celebrate some religious festivals through themed meals representing these cultures. A strong feature is the extensive consultation with young people concerning a wide range of issues relating to life at the home. Irrespective of their social backgrounds, young people are treated with respect and encouraged to achieve their potential.

The home's Statement of Purpose gives a clear indication of what the young people can expect from the home. This statement gives an insight into the purpose of the home and identifies the skills and experience of the staff. It reflects the clear commitment to equality and diversity.

The staff work effectively as a team and through regular training they have developed the skills and competences to work with children who have complex emotional and behavioural needs. The staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The required standard that at least 80% of staff must have achieved this qualification has been exceeded. The managers are required by the company to achieve management qualifications. The manager and deputy manager are currently completing management training. Young people are cared for by qualified and experienced staff. This promotes their safety and well-being.

The staffing at the home is appropriate in numbers to ensure that young people are

well cared for and to maintain efficiency including the safety of staff and young people. The management provides effective leadership, support and supervision for the staff. They share a common approach ensuring the focus is on outcomes for children. This is clearly demonstrated in the reports prepared by staff about individual young people.

Young people's records are well maintained and are clear and focused on outcomes.

There is a very effective monitoring system in place to enable the manager to assess the quality of information contained in key records concerning the young people. This is enhanced by the monthly external visits from senior managers not employed at the home. These additional visits ensure that standards are maintained. The monitoring of the operation of the home is very strong and enhances the safeguarding of the young people.