

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Suzanne Young
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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 run by a local authority and provides care for four young people between the ages of 10 and 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties or learning disabilities. The home provides medium to long-term residential care and is run by the local authority. One of the beds can be used for emergency admissions. Currently, three young people are living here.

The home is located in a residential area and has access to local facilities and public transport. There are four single bedrooms with either en-suite toilet and shower facilities or an adjacent bathroom. There is a large lounge, a second lounge, an activities room, kitchen, and dining room. The gardens are landscaped and there is car parking to the front and side of the house.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This inspection was an unannounced key inspection visit. All key standards were inspected. The inspection focused on arrangements to ensure young people's health needs are met, to keep them safe from harm, to enable them to enjoy their lives and achieve their goals, to ensure they participate in decision making about their lives, to prepare them for independence and to allow them to live in a comfortable, well-managed home. The inspection also considered the capacity of the home to ensure all young people have equal access to services and equality of opportunity.

The home is judged as good in all outcome areas apart from enjoying and achieving and positive contribution which were both considered outstanding. The home provides excellent levels of individual support to young people in line with their care plans. Staff are committed to ensuring young people are able to achieve their potential and are able to participate in the decisions affecting them.

The home has some administrative shortfalls in relation to records which do not seriously impact on the outcomes for young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection. These have both been met by the Registered Manager. Room searches are now signed by all those involved and night time fire drills are taking place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home delivers good health outcomes for young people. The manager and staff within the home actively promote good health care and healthy lifestyles. Young people are supported to eat a nutritious, healthy diet and are encouraged to be involved in the shopping and preparation of meals as a part of developing independence. Meals are developed in discussions between staff and young people during their weekly meetings. As a result, all young people have meals which reflect their individual needs.

Young people are provided with guidance, advice and support on health issues appropriate to their individual needs and wishes. They benefit from an informed and planned approach to meeting their needs which includes successful partnerships with professionals from health services. Specialist health professionals visit the home on a regular basis to provide advice, guidance and support.

Young people's health needs are identified and good support given. All young people have comprehensive health records in place which cover all aspects of health requirements. These form the basis for any individual work undertaken with young people. Although the health records are updated on a monthly basis these have not all been updated to reflect young people's current medication requirements. Accurate health records are important to ensure that staff are well informed about young people's historical and current medical and health needs.

Staff ensure that the welfare of young people in relation to medication is safeguarded through effective recording and auditing systems. This is extended for when young people go on home visits through partnership arrangements with family members. All staff who administer medication are appropriately trained and medication is safely stored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home provides an environment that is safe and secure and which provides good arrangements for the promotion, protection and care of young people. There is a range of policies and procedures to promote their safety and welfare. Staff in the home are trained and competent to safeguard children and young people from abuse and have access to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures. These ensure staff respond to allegations or suspicions of abuse appropriately.

Staff complete detailed individual and environmental risk assessments which are reviewed and updated on a regular basis. These enable staff to be well-informed about each young person in their care and underpin the care afforded to young people ensuring safety and welfare is promoted at all times.

Systems are in place to help protect young people from bullying and unauthorised absences. Staff follow missing from care protocols and work closely with agencies to ensure young people are returned safe and well. Bullying is not tolerated within the home and staff work closely with young people on an individual basis and within young people's meetings to help prevent bullying occurring.

Young people are further safeguarded as clear systems are in place to manage complaints. Young people are aware of how to make complaints and any complaint is dealt with appropriately and without delay. Young people say they feel safe in the home and understand how to make complaints.

Good behaviour management systems are in place that encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people have detailed behaviour management plans in place which are linked to risk assessments and key working sessions and which give clear guidance to staff on how to effectively manage young people's behaviour. There is positive interaction between the staff and the young people. There have been no recorded instances of physical intervention since the last inspection and the use of sanctions are low. When imposed, sanctions are appropriate. All staff receive training in de-escalation techniques and physical intervention.

The home has effective policies and systems in place to ensure the home is safe from hazards and to protect young people from risk of fire in the home. Staff undertake robust risk assessments for all aspects of the premises and grounds. All the fire systems are tested regularly and fire evacuation drills are undertaken in excess of requirements. A night time fire drill has taken place and measures have been put into place where shortfalls have been identified.

Staff vetting procedures are managed centrally. Staff recruitment practices are in place for the careful selection and vetting of all new staff, including agency workers, to ensure the protection of young people. There are some minor shortfalls in recruitment practices, however, which have the potential to compromise young people's safety. Gaps in the employment histories of prospective new staff are not always fully explored and staff recruited internally within the authority are only asked to provide one reference.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide excellent support to individual young people. Each young person receives personalised care and support that matches their needs and requirements. These are identified through clear individual care and key-worker action plans which cover all areas of Every Child Matters outcomes. Comprehensive key-worker sessions take place which cover the areas identified in action plans. Young people are able to make comments about key-worker sessions and their effectiveness.

Staff write monthly reports which are sent to social workers and parents detailing

young people's progress. They have developed strong relationships with professionals from other agencies such as health, schools, colleges and youth support to support young people to achieve their potential. Youth workers visit the home weekly to visit young people and work with staff around issues such as healthy eating, bullying and equality and diversity.

Staff are committed to supporting and encouraging young people to enjoy and achieve in both education and leisure activities. Staff actively support young people to engage in full time education programmes and college placements. Young people's own individual interests are also actively supported within the home to ensure that each young person's individuality and identity is acknowledged and embraced. Staff successfully engage young people to enable them to develop the skills and confidence to progress in their achievements. Young people have safe access to computers and the Internet.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff undertake excellent assessments of young people's individual needs. They complete detailed and comprehensive placement care plans which link to risk assessments and individual work conducted with young people. Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home. They are involved and consulted about their placements and are encouraged to read and sign their placement care plans and discuss their needs, views and wishes. Young people are fully supported to participate in statutory reviews and planning meetings which are held on a regular basis.

Young people are admitted to and leave the home in a planned, sensitive manner. Where possible admissions are planned which enable young people to make a number of introductory visits to the home prior to admission. Discharges are also handled professionally and sensitively with the home, fully supporting young people in this process.

Staff support young people to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and other significant people. Family and friends are encouraged to visit the home. Where appropriate staff work in close contact with family members.

Excellent systems are in place to ensure young people are provided with opportunities to make a positive contribution within the home. They are encouraged and supported to make decisions and influence the way the home is run. The home has developed some excellent practice in consulting with young people. Their views and opinions are sought through reviews, residents meetings and in key-worker sessions about a range of matters that affect them. Young people actively engage in the running of the home. They are able to choose the décor within the home and are involved in the recruitment of new members of staff. Through these forums, staff are able to develop and improve practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live in an environment that is warm and comfortable and which provides sufficient space to meet their needs. The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard which creates a pleasant living environment for young people. Young people have their own bedrooms with the majority having en-suite facilities. They are able to personalise their bedrooms to their individual tastes. The home has a handyman to carry out any repairs and maintenance issues as they occur.

Staff encourage young people to engage in opportunities that will enable them to progress in their achievements, develop skills, build confidence and facilitate a meaningful transition into young adulthood. Young people are assisted to develop self care skills such as budgeting, shopping and meal preparation. Staff actively support to young people in obtaining places on appropriate college courses and have developed good links with aftercare workers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The organisation of the home supports good and outstanding outcomes for young people. The home is effectively managed and the staff team are organised and supported to ensure the needs of young people are comprehensively met.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff are committed to ensuring that all young people are safe and feel safe by tackling bullying and by reducing victimisation because of race, religion, ethnicity, gender and sexuality. Equality and diversity is an integral part of key-work planning. Staff promote diversity and tolerance taking into account the individual needs of young people.

The home has a Statement of Purpose and a welcome pack for young people which provides accurate information about the home and gives young people good information about the service they will receive. The authority has comprehensive guidance and procedures for staff and has systems in place to monitor the operation of the home. These include regular visits from representatives of the authority through to the Registered Manager's own monitoring activities. Auditing and monitoring of files and records is robust although no written evaluation of this monitoring or development plan has been developed to identify any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home.

The home has clear deputising arrangements in the absence of the Registered Manager. The number of staff on duty is always enough to meet the needs young people and support their welfare and protection. A minimum of two members of staff are on duty throughout the day with waking night staff on duty as well as staff sleeping in at night. There are no vacancies at this current time.

The home has an experienced and well qualified staff team to meet the needs of the young people living in the home. Staff are trained and competent to meet their needs. There is a comprehensive training programme that provides staff with the skills and knowledge to help young people. The majority of staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at level three.

The home maintains good quality records. Young people's records are held both electronically and in paper format. Staff have access to all information pertaining to the young people about their history and progress which matches the necessary requirements set out in legislation.

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 each child has a clear, accurate written health plan in place which details medication and health requirements (NMS 12.2)
- ensure there is a written record of the recruitment practice which is followed in respect of all staff who work with children in the home, including evidence that all requirements of Schedule 2 have been met (27.1)
- ensure there is a written development plan, reviewed annually for the future of the home, identifying any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home. (NMS 33.5)