

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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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

This service provides residential accommodation for up to five looked after young people, all with complex emotional and behavioural needs. They provide care for both genders between the ages of 12 and 17 years.

The premises are large and spacious, providing homely accommodation for the young people. On the ground floor, there are two lounges which are linked by connecting doors, a kitchen and dining area, staff office, utility area and a toilet. Children's bedrooms are all single and are located on the first floor. On this floor there are also two bathrooms for use by young people. There is an outside area to the rear of the property that is large enough for play and parking facilities are to the front of the property.

The home is close to local shops, transport links and community resources.

Young people, staff, and management participated within this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full inspection that was conducted unannounced. All key standards were assessed to help form a judgement on the provision of care.

Young people live in an environment that enables them to have positive outcomes in many areas of their lives. The home has created an atmosphere where young people and staff work together to make sure they are safe, solve problems, lead healthy lifestyles, enjoy learning and achieve, and are well prepared for adult life. Young people are viewed positively by staff and seen as individuals with different needs, tastes and interests. Their specific needs are identified in written plans that outline how their needs will be met on a daily basis. There is a strong commitment from the staff and management team to support the individual needs of the young people.

There are few shortfalls for improving. These relate to parts of young people's records, identified training for staff, reaffirming positive behaviour with young people, finishing touches to household repairs and consistent professional supervision for staff.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection two actions and four recommendations were made. The Registered Manager was asked to ensure that staff received child protection training.

This has been undertaken with staff. They were also asked to ensure that they had up-to-date information to inform placement plans for the young people placed within the home. This action is repeated on this inspection, although with regards to different young people.

Good practice recommendations were as follows; ensure all staff in the home are aware of, trained in and follow the home's policy on behaviour management, and that the training covers reducing or avoiding the need to use physical restraint. While there is some evidence that this has been completed with some staff, further staff have not undertaken this training. This is raised as an action within this report. This inspector has been informed that this will be undertaken in January 2011.

To ensure that staff have access to young people's placing authorities' child protection procedures and that any conflicts within them are discussed with the local authority in which the home is situated. This has been completed.

To ensure all unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children are identified and where possible eliminated, for example regular testing of portable appliances within the home. This has been completed and maintained.

To ensure records of visits to the home for the purpose of monitoring, reflect the opinions of parents, relatives, staff and young people in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. This has been completed and an improved format has been introduced in order to assess the quality of care and identify areas for further improvement.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people receive a nutritious and balanced diet that promotes their good health and well-being. Menu planning is discussed within the household by all concerned and includes a variety of foods from other cultures which young people are encouraged to try. Young people enjoy a cultural evening on a regular basis, such as Indian, Chinese and Caribbean. This means they learn to appreciate different cultures and enjoy a wide selection of foods. Menu planning takes account of young people's individual tastes, preferences and needs. Young people are routinely involved in developing independence skills by helping to prepare some meals or snacks with guidance from staff so that they are able to cook a selection of meals when they leave.

Young people's current health care services and some details of medical histories are outlined in health care plans for young people. However, these documents do not fully reflect the detail, of which the placing authority would hold. This has been requested by the service of the relevant authorities. This means that not all information concerning health needs is used to update the health plan. There is positive evidence of health care programmes, where young people and staff closely follow suitable guidance from clinicians to address specific issues. Such areas could

include; weight management and emotional support for example. This helps to ensure that young people are well supported to lead healthy lifestyles.

All medicines are stored safely in a suitable, locked cabinet. All staff are comprehensively trained in medicine administration and first aid, following good procedures to safeguard young people's health and welfare. This means that children receive the medication they need at the appropriate times and that young people's health needs are met to a good standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate a high degree of respect for young people's privacy and handle confidential information with care. Room searches are infrequent, when undertaken they are carried out appropriately where there are concerns that young people may have something inappropriate. Young people's access to other residents' bedrooms is well-managed, which provides individuals with their private space. Personal data relating to young people is stored securely in line with internal policy and the standards.

Complaints are well recorded and quickly dealt with. Young people are confident that they know how to make a complaint and that it will be dealt with. Complaints have been made since the last inspection and all have been promptly and effectively resolved. Young people have telephone numbers of senior managers and of people independent of the home so that they can seek help externally should they wish to. There is a complaints procedure for neighbours and others to access to ensure that they are taken seriously and acted upon.

Staff are trained in safeguarding procedures so that they know how to respond to allegations or disclosures of abuse. Staff also work with young people to raise their awareness of bullying, racism and intolerance. Name calling and inappropriate banter is discouraged. However, staff have not received training in this area and young people with different abilities do not always understand the support available.

Good procedures are followed by staff to safeguard the welfare of young people who are missing from home and there are effective protocols with the local police to promote their safe and swift return.

Staff follow behaviour management plans and use positive measures of control. Sanctions and restraints are recorded. However, regular staff training in behaviour management of young people including, the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline has lapsed, though it has been booked for the new year.

Good health and safety measures promote the safety of the home. Fire drills are practised each month at different times of the day so that young people and staff know what to do in the event of a fire. Risk assessments are carried out on the home and on young people's known and likely hazardous activities so that steps are taken

to reduce risks to the welfare of young people and staff.

The home safeguards young people as far as possible from contact with potential abusers. It does this by monitoring and supervising visitors to the home and by carrying out robust recruitment procedures for new staff. The Registered Manager carries out risk assessments and puts into place one-to-one staffing arrangements where identified and needed. This ensures that young people have good safeguards in place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive a good care service which is suitable to their needs, promoting their skills and abilities. There is a consistent therapeutic element of the care package, which enhances young people's outcomes and is reflected within their care at home. The content of key worker sessions is relevant to the young people involved. This means that young people enjoy consistent care programmes with opportunities to develop their social and self help skills.

Young people and key staff within the home work well with professionals from within their respective school, training or education networks. This helps young people to access, education and vocational training suitable to their needs. The home provides suitable study space, which means that young people are supported within the home environment with any homework or one-to-one educational support. However, personal educational plans for young people are not all up-to-date, though the home is actively following this up.

Young people have good opportunities to engage in social and leisure activities. Individual interests are promoted by supporting young people to pursue particular interests and hobbies, such as general maintenance, guitar and arts and crafts. Group activities with the home are facilitated and there has also been a holiday away in the summer. The young people say that they really enjoy the activities and are keen to try new things. The skills mix of the staff group contributes to young people developing new skills and interests. Young people are encouraged to make suggestions about how they spend their leisure time.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have individual plans in place which detail how their needs are to be addressed. However, information has not been fully obtained for some young from their placing authorities. This information would ensure that young people's needs were fully known and identified.

Consideration is given to religious, racial, cultural, social and identity needs with plans in place to address all. Placement plans are consistent with the information

provided by the placing authority. They are regularly updated to take account of young people's needs.

Young people talk with staff about issues relating to their day-to-day care and future plans. They have the opportunity to ask questions, raise any matters of concern and put forward their ideas, feelings and views. They are encouraged to attend their statutory reviews and staff help them to express their wishes and feelings where necessary. The home prepares a report for each statutory review. In addition, staff keep social workers up-to-date with any changes to the placement plan and ensure they know about the progress young people are making.

The home provides young people with good support to maintain contact with their families. This includes arranging overnight accommodation for families, transporting young people long distances and supervising contact visits. This enables young people to maintain positive contact with their families, in accordance with their needs and wishes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff encourage young people to develop the skills they need for adult life suitable to their age and understanding. They routinely learn skills through taking part in the running of the home, and carrying out tasks such as cooking, tidying their bedrooms, bringing their washing down and managing money. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future.

Young people have suitable personal allowances, including enough money for clothes and toiletries. They choose how to spend their allowances with support and guidance from staff and in this way learn how to manage money effectively. Support and guidance are given by staff to encourage young people to dress in an appropriate way. While still being able to express their individuality in how they dress, taking into account their culture, the season, their age and level of understanding.

The home is domestic in its environment and is in keeping with other houses within the area. A maintenance programme is in place. Parts of the home have recently been repaired or replaced. There is some bare plaster around door frames and in parts on walls where repairs have been made. The purchase of various items, such as pictures and other furnishings to create a more homely environment has been granted by the organisation's head office.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people benefit from the staff group's developed understanding and sensitive approach to their individual needs.

Care is provided with a high regard for each young person's identity and heritage, whilst maintaining a well balanced focus on the need for social and emotional development whilst in the placement. This means that young people are treated with respect, and individuals are not pre-judged for their background or histories.

The home provides a clearly written Statement of Purpose which meets the requirements of regulations. Young people live in a home where there is a strong commitment to good childcare practice. The Registered Manager and staff have created a warm and supportive environment where young people are valued. The children's guide provides important information about the home in a way that is easily understood by young people.

Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the Registered Manager is available and helpful and they receive one-to-one supervision. However, this is not consistent for all and new staff have not received the additional supervision described in the standards for new starters. However, team meetings take place every month, to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer. They also reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who have a range of skills and experience. The staff team have a relevant qualification in working with young people. The number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and attending appointments. Staff have access to a training programme that covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

The internal monitoring of the quality of care provided to young people, is completed and recorded by the Registered Manager in line with the regulations. The resulting report is very detailed. This means that the quality assurance programme is robust and collates information from several relevant quarters. The provider also consistently monitors the running of the home every month. The results of the quality checks are used well to improve the care of the young people and enhance their outcomes.

Young people are encouraged to read and make comments about what is written about them. The home's written records provide a good picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress.

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
22	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training, such as, the behaviour management of young people including, the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline (Regulation 27, (4) (a))	18/01/2011
2	ensure that there is an up to date placement plan for each young person accommodated at the home. (Regulation 12(1)(a) and (b) and Regulation 12(2))	20/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure each young person has an up-to-date health plan that fully identifies their medical history, physical, emotional and other healthcare needs (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that the policy on bullying is reviewed frequently with staff and young people, including the different types of bullying and that staff receive training in the awareness of, and effective strategies to counter bullying (NMS 18.2)
- ensure that each young person has a personal education plan which explicitly addresses their educational needs (NMS 14.4)
- ensure that the home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment (NMS 24.2)
- ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each month and that new staff receive at least one and a half hours of one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff, fortnightly, during the first six months of their employment (NMS 28.2)