

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 setting is one of three homes operated by the same organisation. The home aims to provide a holistic approach to the welfare and development of young people in their care, accommodating six young people on a planned or emergency basis between the ages of 12 to 17 years on admission. All young people living at the home will have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The service benefits from good transport and access to local amenities and services. Four young people were being accommodated at the time of the inspection; three young people expressed their views and opinions on what it is like living at the home.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced key inspection took place during one day in the week. One recommendation was made as a result of this inspection. The setting was judged as outstanding overall. The home continues to provide an excellent standard of care across all outcome areas. Such high standards of care have clearly been maintained since the last inspection within an ethos of seeking to improve practice wherever possible. Young people feel 'safe' and 'looked after' and state this is 'their home'.

The emotional needs of young people play a crucial role in all aspects of care planning and review. Young people receive outstanding individual support and guidance with additional professional input and liaison sought when necessary. The challenging or risky behaviours of young people are fully assessed with intervention strategies implemented to meet specific issues or circumstance. Staff work extremely hard to keep young people as safe as possible including close working with other responsible agencies, such as social services and the police.

Young people are given clear boundaries and expectations of behaviour and are supported to make the right choices. A well known system of sanctions are in place, although the term 'grounding' is somewhat open to interpretation.

Care planning incorporates the individual needs and wishes of young people with the format being improved since the last inspection. The right of the young people to be able to express their views and opinions is highly valued and promoted. Young people live in a really nice environment which has been improved with redecoration since the last inspection. Excellent management enables the staff team to reflect on their practice and to work closely together to achieve excellent outcomes for the young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

One action was made at the last inspection in relation to the acting manager needing to send in an application to Ofsted to become Registered Manager. An application has been received at Ofsted and is in the process of being completed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are offered a varied and healthy diet and have their likes and dislikes taken account of. They are able to prepare snacks and meals and this enables them to develop their life and independence skills. Young people's opinions about meals were generally positive.

The health care needs of young people are met consistently and to a high standard. Each young person has a health care plan detailing their physical, medical and emotional care needs and how these will be addressed. Appointments with health professionals are arranged and specialist input is gained to ensure young people receive the help and treatment they require. Staff clearly encourage young people to lead healthy lifestyles and take regular exercise.

Emotional and psychological well-being are promoted to an excellent standard. The approach operated in the home ensures that young people are supported in addressing their behaviours and anxieties in a sensitive and supportive manner. The atmosphere in the home is caring and therapeutic with young people able to confide in staff about their thoughts and feelings. Staff display a considerable level of understanding and appreciation of unconscious processes and in turn are able to provide extremely thoughtful care. Close liaison with health care professionals ensures young people receive focused intervention including therapy and counselling.

The home has a rigorous system for ensuring that the administration of medication is closely monitored and regularly audited by a member of staff and the manager. All medication is stored securely in the office.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy is valued and respected by the staff team and sensitive information is stored securely. Young people are made aware of the circumstances when room searches may occur; an accurate record is made when these searches take place.

Young people are given clear details of how to make a complaint should they wish. Young people are aware of how to complain and say they feel able to talk to staff easily. When issues arise they are dealt with swiftly with young people engaged in dialogue and made a key part of the process. No complaints have been received by Ofsted since the last inspection.

The approach toward keeping young people safe is outstanding. All members of staff receive child protection training and are up-to-date with child protection procedures. Staff are clear as to their obligations in the event that they have concerns about a young person's well-being. Young people all have individualised risk assessments in place which detail their specific issues including any propensity to place themselves at risk. Detailed records are maintained on any child protection concerns and how they have been pursued and resolved. The home's approach with regards to ensuring that any child protection matters are addressed, is rigorous and involves close liaison with all agencies including the local police.

Young people report that bullying is not tolerated in the home and is not a concern for them. The staff team are very aware of group dynamics and relationships and will address issues openly in house meetings as well as in individual sessions.

The home has a clear policy in place for the staff to follow in the event that a young person leaves the home without permission. Staff are fully aware of each young person's vulnerability should they go missing. Every care plan confirms what course of action will be pursued should young people leave the home without permission. This strategy is also explained to the young people so that they understand what the consequences will be if they go missing. The staff liaise with the police swiftly if there are any incidents of young people going out without permission.

The approach toward behaviour management is outstanding. Young people have their challenging, negative or risky behaviours assessed as part of a comprehensive care planning process. Risk assessments are constructed utilising all available information coupled with expert advice and strategy planning. Individual behaviour management plans provide a clear and obvious guide for staff to follow. The atmosphere in the setting encourages respect for each other and provides a safe environment for young people to learn and develop more acceptable ways of behaviour and attitude.

The home aims to assist young people to behave appropriately in their own communities. Good links and relationships between staff and support workers in the areas where young people come from, enables excellent communication to exist thus ensuring staff are up to date with issues which affect young people when they spend time on contact visits. For instance a link has been established with an inner city support group aimed at reducing the negative impact of gang culture.

Young people are provided with consistent boundaries from staff in line with their own individual behaviour plans. Staff consistently encourage young people to address their problematic behaviours through discussion, considering alternatives and continued positive reinforcement. Young people have their behaviours linked to an incentive programme with their actions and efforts being considered regularly. Staff liaise with external agencies, including the local youth offending team, to ensure young people are assisted to address any criminal related behaviours. All members of staff receive training in the method of physical intervention used in the home. Incidents of restraint are very rare, with just one since the last inspection.

Should young people choose to behave in an inappropriate manner, then sanctions are implemented. Young people felt that sanctions were fair and the reasons for them are clearly explained. Sanctions are recorded in a bound book, though the use of the term 'grounding', for loss of free time or an activity, could be misleading. Sanctions are checked and endorsed by the manager. All sanctions are appropriate and include such measures as loss of outings or free time. Emphasis is placed on encouraging reparation with young people agreeing alternatives to punitive sanctions, including doing extra chores around the home, like cleaning the settings car.

Appropriate measures are taken to ensure the health and safety of those who live and work at the home. Risk assessments are made with regards to the premises and activities, which the young people partake in. They are regularly reviewed and updated. Fire drills occur regularly and all fire safety equipment is checked and serviced when required as are gas and electrical appliances.

The home has a comprehensive recruitment process. No members of staff work with the young people until all the necessary checks and references have been confirmed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent approach ensures the individual needs of young people are met. Consistently high levels of support are provided with key working playing a fundamental role in the service. Young people clearly engage in the process with staff providing them with care, support and guidance to match their individual circumstances. Staff clearly understand the particular needs of young people extremely well while young people clearly benefit from one-to-one support offered by their key workers and other staff. Regular sessions ensure young people have every opportunity to address their own behaviours, feelings and thoughts in a sensitive manner. Young people said staff 'really understood them' and help them 'learn about themselves and life'.

Staff display considerable understanding of each young person's physical, medical and social care needs with a notable focus on their emotional well-being. Young people are encouraged to participate in the development of their individual care plans and sign to agree to the boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Routine staff meetings review the individual progress of each young person with comprehensive care planning responding to changing needs and circumstances.

A positive learning culture encourages young people to engage in their education. Each young person has a personal education plan that defines the type of programme they should be receiving. Close liaison with local authorities ensures that the correct type of provision is sought for each individual young person. The organisation employ the services of a number of tutors who can visit young people within the homes to engage them in programmes of education.

Young people benefit from living in a home where activities occur routinely. Staff display a high level of motivation and enthusiasm which in turn encourages young people to participate in the things they enjoy. Regular visits take place to local places of interest, the cinema and leisure centres. Wherever possible the individual interests of young people are supported and facilitated. The whole young person group went on holiday together during the summer which was seen as very positive by staff and young people alike.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

A rigorous process ensures no young person moves in without first having their individual needs comprehensively assessed and considered. Each referral is viewed alongside the existing needs, vulnerabilities and dynamics of the current living group. Young people are normally visited in person before they are admitted with the acting manager or deputy manager able to make further assessment of need before a final decision on admission is made.

The settings care planning and review procedures are excellent. The physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of each young person are incorporated into comprehensive plans of care. Care plans provide a detailed assessment and planning framework, which cover every aspect of care provision. The individual needs of young people are highlighted and assessed with details of how they will be met by staff. Young people help to complete care plans with their views taken into consideration. Care planning is holistic with the organisation ensuring intervention programmes, such as therapy and counselling are sought and provided when necessary.

Reviews of care are robust and ensure each care plan matches the current needs of each young person in an individualised fashion. The whole staff team contribute to routine child focus meetings where any change to each young person's circumstance, behaviour or emotional well-being are considered fully. Excellent reviews of care, focus on the progress of the respective young person against their care plan. Similar reports are provided for statutory looked after children reviews with young people being supported to attend and participate.

The particulars of any agreed contact arrangements are recorded in detail. Risk assessments are completed for such visits and updated when and if necessary. Clear records are kept of every contact which provides a picture of the circumstance of visits and their outcome. Staff work hard to assist young people to maintain appropriate contact with family and friends. Most pleasing is to see young people making and keeping friendships with other young people who have previously lived in the home.

Young people are given every possible opportunity to express their views and to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. House meetings take place

regularly and form a routine aspect of living at the home. The atmosphere within the setting is open and relaxed with young people clearly feeling comfortable to say what they feel to staff in an informal manner. The organisation carry out monthly surveys with young people to assess the standard of care being provided. Young people felt this was a very positive idea and noted that the questionnaires often have their questions 'changed about' which keeps them 'interesting' and 'worth doing'. Clear details of advocacy services are displayed around the home should young people choose to contact more independent agencies.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are given excellent support and guidance as they approach adulthood. Specific plans are put in place to assist young people based on their age and abilities. The setting have developed their own life skills programme which takes account of local authority placement planning; since the last inspection this has been improved with extra areas included such as more up to date benefit information. Staff provide practical advice for issues such as learning to cook, going shopping and budgeting. Personal matters such as relationships, hygiene and safe sexual health are addressed appropriately and sensitively.

Young people are supported to take responsibility for their own lifestyles and to consider how they may fit into living in the wider community. They are given particular support through periods of transition with their needs fully considered as part of any outreach programme once they move on from the home. The culture of the home allows for ex-residents to visit, with prior agreement, and subsequently allows young people opportunities to gain a real idea of the realities of independent living as teenagers who have left care.

The home provides young people with very good standards of accommodation. All areas of the home were found to be in a good condition being well maintained throughout. Since the last inspection a number of areas within the home have been redecorated and improved with new pictures having been added. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms and to help chose the décor of the home. Communal areas offer young people a good level of space and comfort with all modern entertainment items being available. The way in which the setting has been furnished and decorated creates a relaxed and homely feel.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's Statement of Purpose is up to date and accurately reflects what the home intends to achieve. There is a young person's handbook, which explains all the key aspects of living at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each young person's

individual needs are known to the staff team and carefully planned for. Additionally, the careful assessment of individual needs as part of the admission process, ensures that not only can individual needs be met to an excellent standard, but those of the whole group can continue to be met. This results in a positive culture where young people and staff live in a safe and caring environment.

All members of staff receive regular supervision and appraisals. Staff say they receive excellent levels of on-going support from senior members of staff and are made to feel part of the team. Additionally there are regular team meetings to discuss the running of the home and the young people's behaviour and progress. The dynamics of the staff team are further addressed through the attendance to meetings by an extremely experienced member of the senior management team from within the organisation. Such an approach enables staff to consider the therapeutic aspects of their tasks and how these are reflected in practice.

The organisation continue to offer staff excellent training and career development opportunities. There is a rolling training programme for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for children and young people. New staff undertake a thorough induction plan which ensures they are prepared for working in the home. Staff are supported to broaden their learning and gain expertise, such as focusing their yearly appraisals on a key area. This has recently included staff pursuing specific training in offending behaviour and therapeutic interventions.

The care team are experienced, qualified and clearly skilled to offer excellent levels of support to the young people. Morale within the team appears very high with staff obviously motivated and enthusiastic in looking after the young people in their care.

The home is managed in an outstanding manner. The acting manager was previously the Registered Manager and is also a director of the organisation. Since the last inspection an application has been received at Ofsted to register the acting manager as Registered Manager for the service; the application is currently being processed.

The approach taken in running the home places the individual needs of young people in high regard. All aspects of carer provision are regularly checked including restraints, sanctions, medication, accidents, child protection issues and admissions and discharges. The overall monitoring of records carried is of an excellent standard. The quality of monitoring ensures that the standard of care is rigorously and constantly assessed to ensure that the young people are being cared for to an excellent standard and that everyone's safety and well-being is being promoted and protected. Practice is also monitored by an external manager who carries out regular visits to assess the standard of care provided.

The young people's care plans are very well organised, regularly reviewed and updated and are subject to thorough checks by the manager. Records of progress, in house reviews and key working sessions are of a particularly high standard. This ensures that those caring for the young people have up-to-date and relevant information available to guide them in their care of the young people.

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):

- consider adding more details in the sanction log when the term 'grounding' is used (NMS 22.10)