

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nick Veysey
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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

This is a children's home for three young people, from 10 years old up to 17 years old with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a semi detached house and its location enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, a railway station, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres, the beach and parks.

The two young people living in the home took part in the inspection.

Summary

This visit was an interim inspection and was unannounced. The inspection looked at the key standards relating to young people's health, safeguarding and the management of the home. In addition, it looked at the progress the home has made with the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to the behaviour management records, the standard of the accommodation, and the effectiveness of the quality assurance system to make the necessary improvements to the standard of care provided.

The home still provides young people with a good standard of care with outstanding features relating to young people's health and well-being. The vast majority of the regulations and standards are met to a very good level. Young people enjoy living in the home and feel safe and well supported. The home provides a safe, caring and stable home environment for vulnerable young people. The home ensures that young people's health is actively promoted through healthy diets, making sure that they get the right support when they are unwell, their medication is handled very safely, and they are encouraged to take an interest in their own welfare and develop healthy lifestyles.

Staff work very hard to ensure young people are protected from harm and to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They are excellent at getting young people to talk about the things that worry them and providing support and reassurance. They are very skilled and competent with a very clear understanding of the personal needs of the young people they look after.

However, the standard of the accommodation is only satisfactory. Although some improvements have been made to the living conditions, further work still needs to be completed. For example, one of the bedrooms is unsuitable to be used by young people until it is properly furnished.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The behaviour management records now provide a much more detailed picture of the events leading up to the use of a disciplinary measure, such as a sanction, and how the situation was resolved. Also, there is more written evidence to show that staff are reflecting on how effective sanctions are being at addressing unacceptable behaviour. This assists both staff and young people to have a better understanding of any problems and know what works to sort things out.

The home has good systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The provider and manager consistently monitor the running of the home every month. They identify areas for

improvement and since the last inspection suitable steps have been taken to address any shortfalls. For example, the house has now been decorated to improve the standard of the accommodation and a new shower cubicle has been fitted. Young people confirm that it is a much nicer place to live.

However, some of the problems with the living conditions have not been fully addressed. For example, repairs to the dining table and in the kitchen have not been done, the hall, dining room and one of the bedrooms are still waiting for new carpets and furniture.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy, varied and nutritious meals from different cultures that meet their dietary needs. Their food choices are always taken into account and they confirm that they routinely help plan meals, go with staff to buy food and cook. Young people said that they are cooking tea and going to the supermarket with staff to buy spare ribs and rice to make a Chinese meal. Staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They actively encourage young people to eat fruit and vegetables and develop healthy eating habits.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being are actively promoted. Young people have easy access to community health services. For example, they are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician, and access specialist health services. They have comprehensive health plans that clearly show how their general and specific health needs are met. The plans clearly show where young people are able to take responsibility for their own health care and asked their views about their own health needs. Staff routinely review the plans to make sure they are up to date and take into account any changes in young people's health. Staff closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy by encouraging them to attend routine health checks and by ensuring they get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are unwell.

Staff always encourage young people to take an active interest in looking after their health and leading healthy lives. The home places a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles. Young people access information about a wide range of health and social issues, including sexual health and relationships, smoking, diet, exercise, alcohol, drugs, personal hygiene, steps to reduce risk of infection from illnesses and emotional well-being. Young people also have good advice and information about public health campaigns, such as immunisation to prevent the risk of cervical cancer. This enables them to make informed choices about their health and raises their awareness about important health and social issues.

The home's procedures for managing medication are put into practice effectively to ensure young people's welfare is promoted and protected. Medication is securely stored and records of any medication taken by young people are up to date and accurately kept. Staff make sure that young people only have medication specifically prescribed for them and take it in line with the prescription instructions.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff respect young people's privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect them. Young people have single bedrooms with their own keys. The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time alone when they wish. Information about young people is managed confidentially.

Young people feel able to talk to staff if they have any problems. They know how to complain and are clear that their concerns will be taken seriously, and promptly and fairly addressed. They have access to information about their rights, the complaints procedure and advocacy services suitable to their ages and level of understanding.

The home gives protecting young people from harm a high priority. Staff understand about their roles and responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. The home has detailed and clear procedures and guidance for responding to concerns about young people's safety. Staff are knowledgeable about safeguarding procedures and put them in practice effectively when they have concerns about young people's safety. They work well with safeguarding agencies to protect young people by reporting concerns promptly and by liaising with the agencies to develop detailed safeguarding plans and practice. This involves, for example, providing young people with good advice about personal safety.

Young people do not experience bullying and confirm that they get on well. The home has detailed risk assessments that identify potential problems and set out clear strategies for countering the risk of bullying. Staff work effectively with young people to enable them to deal with problems constructively and learn to respect other young people and adults.

The home is good at identifying patterns relating to young people coming in late and works well with young people and local agencies to address the problem. Staff encourage young people to come in on time. Detailed individual risk assessments and plans clearly set out what staff should do if young people are missing. The plans are consistently followed in practice. Staff try to contact young people by telephone; go out to look for them; pick them up; and let the relevant people know about their concerns including local authorities and the police.

The home's behaviour management policy and practice encourages young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour and challenge difficult behaviour constructively. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and the possible consequences of any poor behaviour. Staff view young people in a positive light and encourage acceptable behaviour by talking to them, to try to understand their behaviour and build relationships with them. One young person said that their behaviour had improved since they moved into the home and it was down to the people looking after them, saying 'they don't get in your face'. Young people are always given opportunities to talk about what was upsetting them and reflect on their behaviour once the situation has settled down. This particular approach continues to be effective as a result there are very few incidents of aggressive behaviour.

Formal sanctions are used sparingly and mainly relate to encouraging young people to come in on time. The home keeps detailed records of all the measures of discipline used with young people. This means that the manager and provider have the information they need to review the records of sanctions and restraints to ensure that they are used appropriately in line with the home's procedures. Staff have received training in managing behaviour, including restraint, and this is up dated every year.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, in line with the regulations to ensure the premises are safe and secure. The home's thorough quality assurance systems ensure that the checks are carried out consistently and any problems are immediately addressed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people live in a comfortable environment. The house is clean and furnished to a reasonable standard. Young people like the accommodation and have personalised the home to reflect their interests and individual tastes. They are fully involved in choosing how the home is decorated and furnished. The house has been nicely decorated for Christmas making it feel very homely.

The house has been recently decorated. The two young people living in the home have suitable bedroom accommodation that meets their needs. However, the third bedroom does not have a carpet, suitable window coverings, a suitable bed, or storage facilities, such as wardrobes and sets of drawers for young people to keep their clothes and belongings. As a result it is bedroom is currently unsuitable to accommodate young people. The manager confirmed that young people are not using the room and the carpets and furniture have been ordered.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is very well managed with effective and accountable leadership. The manager and staff show a strong commitment to promoting and safeguarding young people's welfare. They show a clear child-focused and inclusive approach to working with vulnerable young people. They value and respect young people as individuals, and ensure that they receive personalised support that meets the full range of their needs.

Young people know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be looked after. The children's guide provides important information about the home in a way that is easily understood by young people. In addition, the home has a clear written statement for parents and social workers of how the home operates and plans to meet young people's needs.

Staff are well-supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know who they contact for support should the manager not be available. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful and they receive one-to-one supervision regularly. In addition, team meetings take place every month to allow the whole staff team to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, staff development and training, and to look at ways to improve the service they offer.

Young people are looked after by a very competent and stable staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home well. The staff team reflects cultural backgrounds of the young people living in the home. The numbers of staff on duty meets the needs of young people in the best possible way. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

Staff have good access to suitable training. The training programme comprehensively covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs. It is regularly reviewed, to check if there are any additional training needs. Staff confirm that the training helps them understand young people better and how to support them.

The home's written records provide a very detailed picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are well organised, comprehensive and contain up to date information, including the relevant documents from placing authorities.

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
24	ensure that each child is provided with sleeping accommodation which is equipped with furniture, storage facilities and other furnishings including window and floor coverings suitable to their needs. (Regulation 31(8))	31 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural repair and any repairs are carried out promptly. (NMS 24.3)