

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.

There are three young people currently living in the home and all of them took part in the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all the key standards were inspected.

The main focus of the inspection was to find out how well the home meets the needs of young people living there.

This is a good service in most respects with outstanding features in being healthy, enjoying and achieving and making a positive contribution. 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 is very good at seeing young people as individuals and providing them with the right support and services to meet all their personal needs. The home ensures that young people's health is actively promoted through healthy diets, making sure that they get specialist support with health problems and their medication is handled safely.

Staff work very hard to ensure young people are protected from harm and get the help they need to address their problems. Staff clearly understand that young people may become distressed and frustrated and can be particularly affected by changes in their lives. They are excellent at getting young people to talk about the things that worry them and providing support and reassurance, such as helping young people who are preparing to move on to other accommodation.

Staff view young people positively and are committed to helping them develop their confidence and skills. This includes supporting young people's education, making sure that they have training and work experience in things they enjoy and helping young people to become adults.

However, the house is not decorated to a good standard. Although this has been identified as a problem for some time, the provider has not made the required improvements. Also, the records do not give a full evaluation of the sanctions used with young people to show how effective they are in tackling unacceptable behaviour.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no issues identified at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals from different cultures that meets 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. This includes helping to make meals from scratch with fresh ingredients, such as homemade burgers and fruit kebabs. Staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They actively encourage young people to develop healthy eating habits.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being is actively promoted. They are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. They have comprehensive health plans, which clearly show how their general and specific health needs are met. 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. They encourage young people to take responsibility for their own health needs appropriate to their age and understanding, such as making their own appointments and to contact services themselves when they need advice.

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, smoking, alcohol, drugs, personal hygiene and emotional well-being.

The home has excellent links with specialist health and advisory services to make sure that young people get suitable support with specific health issues. For example, staff ensure that young people get the support they need from the child and adolescent mental health services.

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. The home has strong quality assurance systems in place to ensure the procedures are put into practice. This includes checking that the pharmacist sends the correct medication and addressing any discrepancies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected. They confirm that staff 'don't discuss my business'. Young people have single bedrooms with their own keys. The bathroom arrangements promote privacy and with dignity. The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time to be alone when they wish. Young people make and receive telephone calls in private. Information about young people is managed confidentially and held securely in the office. Staff respect young people's privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people.

Young people 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. Staff encourage young people to let them know when they have concerns or if they are unhappy. The home takes complaints from people in the community seriously and deals with them effectively.

Young people feel safe. 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 also have access to the local authority's child protection policy and guidance and all have received suitable training.

Staff are knowledgeable about the 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 a good level of supervision for young people based on their age and the level of risk to make sure they are safe in the home and in the community. Staff provide young people with good advice about personal safety.

Young people confirm that they are not bullied in the home. They are clearly aware that bullying will not be tolerated and staff will sort out any problems. The home has detailed risk assessments that identify potential difficulties 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 to learn to respect other young people and adults.

Staff encourage young people not to go missing and to come in on time. The home has detailed individual risk assessments and plans for what they should do if young people go missing. The plans clearly set out what action is taken, including staff trying to contact young people by telephone, going out to look for them, collecting them when they are found, who should be notified and the timescales for letting them know. Young people go missing very seldom, but when they have, the plans have been put into practice well.

The home's behaviour management policy and practice encourages young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour and to 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 to build relationships with them. Staff show a good understanding of the issues that may influence young people's behaviour, such as anxieties about moving on and take steps to support and reassure them.

Young people have detailed individual behaviour plans that identify specific concerning behaviour, for example, aggression and going missing and set out a range of strategies for addressing the problems. Staff receive training in managing behaviour, including restraint and this is updated every year.

Formal sanctions are used sparingly and mainly relate to encouraging young people to come in on time and challenging behaviour. The home keeps detailed records of all the measures of

discipline used with young people, including incidents where physical interventions have been used. The manager and provider routinely review the records of sanctions and restraints to ensure that they are used appropriately, in line with the home's procedures. However, the records do not provide a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of each sanction and restraint. This information is important in helping staff to work out if the measure is actually helping young people to manage their behaviour constructively or if other strategies may have a more positive result.

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.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. All staff working at the home have had an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check. In addition, the vetting and supervision of visitors to the home is thorough.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are well supported and are making progress in all aspects of their lives. They are able to talk to staff about problems and receive individual support when they need it. Young people confirm that staff spend a lot of time individually with them, are very helpful and kind. They are very positive about the care they receive. One young person said 'I am grateful for the help and now moving onwards'. Another said 'this is not like the other houses. It is nice'.

Young people's individual needs are clearly identified in their placement plans and put into practice effectively. There are many examples of staff providing advice and support with a wide range of young people's possible needs, including gender, sexuality, healthy lifestyles, relationships, emotional well-being, dealing with problems and life skills.

The home makes every effort to find additional support to help meet young people's specific needs. Staff have established very effective partnerships with a wide range of external helping agencies, such as counselling and health services that provides individual young people with specialist support with particular issues. Young people also have access to information about community services they are able to contact themselves for advice.

Education is actively promoted and plays an important part in the lives of young people. Their educational needs are identified in written plans and there are clear arrangements for meeting their needs. Staff see education as important and have created an environment that supports and encourages young people to learn and study. Young people's preferences are taken into account and they have opportunities to study and get work experience in areas that interest them.

Staff actively support young people's daily attendance at school and college. Young people confirm they 'get a lot of help with school work'. Staff also provide excellent emotional and practical support to young people experiencing difficulties with education. The home has strong links with young people's schools and colleges and works effectively with them to support

young people's education. They attend all meetings and school events and always quickly address any problems that arise.

Young people are actively encouraged and supported to take part in leisure activities in the home and community. Staff enable young people to follow individual interests, such as seeing friends, playing tennis, golf, football, cricket, board games, cooking and listening to music. Staff encourage them to fully take part in the cultural life of the local area and their home communities. This includes finding out what is going on locally during the school holidays and making sure young people get involved in activities they will enjoy.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's records provide an excellent insight into the individual needs of young people and the plans in place to meet them. Young people have comprehensive written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. This provides good evidence to show that young people live in a service that is able to meet their needs and provide the support they require. Staff put the plans into practice and keep detailed records about young people's progress and experiences.

Young people's placement plans are reviewed regularly to make sure that they are up to date and continue to meet their needs. Staff and independent advocates actively seek young people's views and ensure that they are listened to and their views about their lives taken into account.

The home encourages young people to have regular contact with their families and friends. Staff actively facilitate and support young people seeing their families. Young people have clear arrangements for contact with their families to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff ensure young people have suitable regular contact and that the arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

The home gathers sufficient information about young people before they move in to ensure that the home is able to meet their needs and assess their compatibility with other young people. Young people move into the home in a sensitive way. Staff are very good at helping them settle in, by making sure they know what is expected of them, what to do if they are worried and their way around the local area. Young people are involved in preparing for leaving the home. Staff provide emotional and practical support for young people leaving the home. They contribute to the assessment of young people's needs to ensure that they continue to get the support they require.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They are involved in decisions about how the home is decorated, what food they eat and what they do in their spare time. Staff encourage young people to meet with them in groups to discuss the running of the home and to find out young people's views about how well they feel they are looked after.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff based on honesty and respect. Staff view young people positively and value them as individuals. They are helpful and clearly enjoy spending time with young people. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people, consistent with good childcare.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are well prepared for adult life. They have clear plans that identify their future needs and the support they require to help them make a successful transition into adulthood. Staff coordinate the plan with the placing authority and it is reviewed regularly, to ensure that it continues to give young people the precise support they need. Young people are fully involved in making decisions about their future plans, such as where they will live and the support they need to help them develop their life skills. The plans cover the practical skills and knowledge young people will need, but also place a great importance on helping young people prepare emotionally for moving on and ensuring they have a strong support network. Young people confirm 'staff help in every way with financial stuff, budgeting, food, buying stuff, saving'.

Staff are clear about their roles in helping young people to develop their life skills. They encourage young people to take more responsibility for themselves, suitable to their age and understanding. Young people routinely take part in the daily tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, changing light bulbs, gardening, checking the water and oil levels in the car and handling money. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene, using public transport and getting themselves ready for school and college.

Young people are encouraged to express their individuality in the way they dress. Their clothes are of a good standard and meet young people's needs relating to age, gender and culture. They are always involved in choosing how to spend their pocket money and allowances for toiletries and clothing.

Young people live in a homely environment that meets their needs. 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. However, they feel that 'the house needs decorating'. The inside of the house has not been decorated for some time and clearly shows significant signs of wear and tear throughout including carpets, the walls and bathroom.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is good. Evidence supports a commitment to delivering equality and diversity in practice. Staff recognise young people as individuals with different needs, backgrounds, interests and views. They ensure that young people receive an individual service designed to meet their personal needs. Staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with ensuring their needs are met. The home values the rights of individuals to be different and promotes respect and dignity.

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 very 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. Staff receive one to one supervision regularly within the timescales recommended in the standards. In addition, team meetings take place regularly 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 competent 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 and provides both positive male and female role models for young people. 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.

The vast majority of the staff have achieved a recognised childcare qualification or are working towards gaining one. 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.

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 but do not always take action. For example, the review of the quality of care reports over at least the last seven months shows that the internal decoration of the home is not satisfactory, but steps have not been taken to address the issue fully.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home are reasonably decorated (Regulation 31.2.e)	13 September 2009
32	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the home (Regulation 34.1.b).	13 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- record in detail the evaluation of the effectiveness and any consequences of all measures of discipline including sanctions and restraints (NMS 22.9 & 22.10).