

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 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

The home offers care and accommodation for up to four young people, between the ages of 13 and 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

It is a detached cottage with three bedrooms, and an annex that provides a semi independent unit for another young person. Both buildings are situated in spacious gardens, two miles from the local shopping centre and all required leisure facilities. Other shops are a short walking distance from the home.

At the time of the inspection four young people were at 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 some outstanding features in being healthy, enjoying and achieving, and making a positive contribution. The vast majority of the National Minimum Standards (NMS) are met to a very good level.

Young people live in a warm and safe 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 well 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 very positively by staff and seen very much as individuals with different needs, tastes and interests. Their specific needs are clearly identified in written plans that comprehensively outline how their needs will be met on a daily basis.

The home is very good at helping young people move in. Placements are very carefully planned to ensure that the home is the right place for individual young people, and is able to help them with their problems.

There are some minor shortfalls that relate to staff supervision, staff records, showing young people's views in the sanctions and restraint records, and the provider's monitoring of the quality of care.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Young people now have access to computers that enables them to use electronic mail and supports and promotes their education and learning. There have also been improvements to the home's furnishings, new sofas have been bought and all the furniture is now in state of good repair.

However, young people are still not encouraged to add their comments and views about sanctions and restraints to the records. This ongoing shortfall fails to adequately show the expressed views of young people in this important area. Also, there continues to be a shortfall in the frequency staff have one to one supervision. This means that their performance and development needs are not been formally considered on a regular basis. It is disappointing that the shortfalls in both of these areas have not been adequately addressed, and should be resolved as a matter of urgency.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary and cultural needs. Young people confirm that their food choices are always taken into account. The meals reflect young people's personal preferences, such as vegetarian food, and tastes. Staff clearly understand what makes a healthy and balanced diet, and encourage young people to develop healthy eating habits. Young people routinely prepare meals and help staff with the shopping.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being is actively promoted. They have comprehensive health plans that clearly show their general and specific health needs and the arrangements for meeting them. Any needs arising from young people's gender and cultural background are identified and fully addressed in their health plans.

Staff ensure that young people are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician and supported to attend routine health checks. Staff closely monitor young people's health and make sure that they always get appropriate advice, support and treatment with health problems and when they are feeling poorly. The home has well-established links with a range community health services, such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), to enable young people to access services to meet their particular needs.

Staff encourage young people to take an interest in looking after their health and to lead healthy lives. They effectively promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging physical activity and balanced diets. Also, they provide young people with good advice, support and information on a wide range of health and social issues including smoking, personal hygiene, infections such as swine flu, alcohol, and sexual health. Young people have also gained a qualification in alcohol awareness.

The home's medication policies are effectively put into practice to ensure that young people's health needs are met and they are protected from harm. 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 excellent quality assurance systems in place to ensure that medication procedures are effectively put into practice on a daily basis.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is actively promoted. They have single bedrooms and their privacy and dignity are respected when washing. The accommodation provides plenty of space where young people can relax easily and spend time alone when they wish. Staff respect young people's

privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. Confidential information is held securely in the office.

Young people know how to complain. They feel that their concerns are listened to, taken seriously and always addressed by staff. For example, staff ensured that a young person saw their family. Young people always receive feedback about the outcome of their complaints. The home has a suitable complaints procedure that is easily accessible to young people, their parents and other relevant people. Staff are very open to responding to young people's concerns, and young people always receive a full response to their complaint well within the timescales set out in the home's procedures.

The home gives protecting young people from harm a high priority. Staff provide young people with good advice about personal safety. Young people confirm that staff 'help us to learn to keep safe'. Staff fully 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 very knowledgeable about the procedures and put them in practice effectively when they have concerns about young people's safety.

The home works well with safeguarding agencies to protect young people by reporting concerns promptly, and liaising with the agencies to develop comprehensive safeguarding plans and practice. Such as, 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.

The home has created an environment where young people are protected from bullying. Young people confirm bullying does not happen and 'won't be tolerated'. Young people are very clear what bullying is and that it is not acceptable. Staff encourage them to talk about any problems they may be having and take their concerns seriously.

The home has clear policies and detailed risk assessments about bullying that deal effectively with discrimination and victimisation such as aggression and insults relating to gender, race, and culture. Staff are fully aware of the potential for bullying and anticipate situations where they may be difficulties. They intervene decisively and effectively to address problems and provide support and guidance to every one involved.

Staff have created an atmosphere where young people can discuss issues, such as, racist language, openly and work together to sort out problems constructively. The home's encouragement of peer support and problem solving plays an important part in countering bullying and building respect and positive relationships between young people.

Staff place a strong emphasis on encouraging young people not to go missing and to come in on time. Both young people and staff are fully aware of young people's rights, legislation and guidance relating to freedom of movement and follow this in practice. 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 consistently well. The plans are always reviewed after each episode of young people going missing. Staff always give young people a warm welcome when they return. They let young people know how concerned they have been; glad that they have come home; and check out if they are hungry or need to see a doctor. Staff encourage young people to talk about what happened with a member of staff of their choice.

The home's comprehensive individual behaviour management plans and risk assessments actively encourages acceptable behaviour and ensures challenging behaviour is effectively addressed. Staff put the plans into practice consistently well.

Young people all know what standards of behaviour are expected and feel that the rules are generally fair. Staff build positive relationships with young people by explaining and showing young people what is socially acceptable behaviour. Staff see young people in a very positive light and are committed to helping them when they are anxious or upset. They are knowledgeable about young people's individual behaviours and know how to address unacceptable behaviour effectively. For example, when young people are agitated, staff talk to them in a calm and reassuring way and this helps young people relax. The home has well-established links with helping agencies, such as CAMHS, and actively seeks advice and guidance in managing specific behaviours.

The home places a great emphasis on encouraging positive behaviour through praise and rewards. The use of sanctions and restraint is usually kept to a minimum and always suitable. Every incident is recorded in detail to show what actually happened and how well the measure worked in addressing unacceptable behaviour. The manager thoroughly reviews the use of sanctions and restraints to ensure they are used appropriately and identify any issues or trends. However, young people are not encouraged to add their comments to records about any sanction or restraint they are involved in. As a result the records fail to show the impact of the measures used on individual young people.

Staff have been trained in suitable behaviour management techniques, and work together well to enable young people to have clear and consistent boundaries, that enables them to develop acceptable behaviour.

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 sound to make sure young people are protected. However, the staff files did not contain all the relevant information about them. For example, not every person had a full employment history with a written explanation for any gaps.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people feel supported and receive individual help and guidance when they need it. Their needs are explicitly identified in comprehensive placement plans, which are put into practice

to an exemplary standard. The home can meet a wide range of young people's potential needs, including healthy lifestyles, culture, dealing with problems, education, gender, relationships and personal care. Young people have every opportunity to talk to staff about their problems and needs. Staff are comfortable discussing sensitive issues, such as race, sexual health and family relationships with young people.

Young people feel that staff are good at 'letting us be ourselves'. Staff treat young people fairly and equally. They place great emphasis on accepting young people as individuals, and promote tolerance by encouraging young people to accept differences and respect each other.

Also, the home has well-established and effective links with a variety of helping services, including advocacy and health services, to ensure that young people have full access to the right support to meet their specific needs, including those relating to emotional well being, equality and diversity.

Young people's education and achievement is actively encouraged and supported. Their placement plans provide extensive details about their learning needs, and how these are supported. Young people enjoy learning are making good progress, producing work of an excellent standard, sitting and gaining GCSEs, and getting places at college. Staff always encourage young people to do well and praise their efforts and abilities.

The home has good links with young people's schools, and work very effectively with their teachers to support their education, follow their progress and deal with any problems that may arise.

The home's daily routines support young people's daily attendance at school. Staff provide practical and emotional support when young people experience difficulties going to school. This support always reflects young people's individual needs and issues they face. One young person said 'I want to go to school, but I'm scared'. Staff are helping them to identify their specific worries about going to school and look at ways to overcome the problems to try to prevent a negative impact on their learning. Where young people are unable to attend school, the home puts in place arrangements, such as employing a tutor, to minimise any disruption to their education. Such arrangements cover every aspect of their education, including preparation for exams and the completion of coursework. This is always seen as a temporary measure and staff chase up the local education authority to provide suitable full time education.

Staff actively encourage young people to enjoy their spare time and to take part in leisure activities at home and in the community. Young people enjoy a wide range of activities and are able to follow particular interests, such as, seeing friends, listening to music, going to the cinema, and rock climbing. Also, young people have planned activities for the summer holidays, including taking part in different 'Do It 4 You' courses organised by the Youth Hostel Association. Young people as a result are able to meet and socialise with young people from different social and cultural backgrounds.

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 plans in place to meet them. Young people have written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. Staff put the plans into practice very well

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 actively seek young people's views and ensure that they are listened to and their views about their lives taken into account.

Young people see their families frequently and are in regular contact by telephone. They have clear arrangements for contact with their families to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff actively ensure young people have suitable regular contact and that the arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

The home plans placements extremely well with young people, the placing authority and the relevant agencies. Young people move into the home in an exemplary way. A lot of time and effort is taken to gather information about young people, their needs and background before they move in to ensure that the home is able to provide the support they require and make sure it is the best possible move for them. Young people's introduction to the home is carefully and sensitively planned, including visits to the home and overnight stays before making the final decision, to address young people's anxieties. This also provides opportunities for staff to assess how young people are likely to get along with young people already living there.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They feel that their views are taken into account and are involved in decisions about how the home is decorated, what food they eat and what they do in their spare time. The provider and staff actively seek young people's views about how well they feel they are looked after. Young people are supported and encouraged to express their views and communicate effectively.

Young people enjoy good relationships with staff based on honesty and respect. Staff are helpful and enjoy spending time with young people. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people consistent with good child care.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are well prepared for adult life. They have clear plans identifying their skills, abilities and needs in relation to becoming more independent and clearly outline the assistance young people require.

Staff encourage young people to take more responsibility for themselves and develop life skills suitable to their age and understanding. Young people routinely take part in the daily tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking and handling money. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future.

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 personal preferences and needs relating 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 and comfortable environment that meets their needs. The house is maintained, decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people like the accommodation and have personalised the home to reflect their interests and individual tastes.

They confirm that they are always involved in decisions about furnishing and colour schemes of their rooms.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and is fully embraced through the care practices of the home. This includes the staff respecting the cultural and social needs of young people. The home provides care and accommodation for young people with a range of complex behavioural, emotional, social and cultural needs. 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.

The home values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity, and has created an environment where people's differences are accepted. Staff are very supportive when young people experience difficulties relating to their cultural background. They take decisive action to deal with all forms of bullying and discrimination.

Young people know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be looked after. They are involved in developing the children's guide. This ensures it is relevant to them, it contains all the information they need to know about the home, and is written in a way that they can easily understand.

Also, the home has a clear written statement for parents and social workers of how the home operates, the services it provides, and plans to meet young people's needs. However, the statement of purpose is not fully up to date because it does not contain the name and details of the person responsible for the running of the service.

Staff are well supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their role 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. Although staff are well supported on a daily basis, they are not receiving formal one to one supervision regularly within the timescale recommended in the standards to monitor their performance, accountability and identify their individual development needs.

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 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 child care qualification or are working towards gaining one. Staff have good access to suitable training. The training programme covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

The home has systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The manager consistently monitors the running of the home every month. They identify areas for improvement and take action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. However, the provider has not visited the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for.

The home's written records provide a clear picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are exceptionally well-written, very organised and contain up to date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. Young people are encouraged to read and make comments about what is written about them.

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
1	revise the statement of purpose to show the name of the current responsible individual for the children's home (Regulation 5.a)	16 August 2009
32	undertake monthly visits as set out in Regulation 33 (Regulation 33.3)	31 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- give young people the opportunity to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against records kept by the home on restraints and sanctions (NMS 22.14)
- ensure that all the information about people working at the home required to be held by the home under Schedule 2 of Children's Homes Regulations 2001 is available for inspection by Ofsted (NMS 27)
- ensure that all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month, and new staff receive one to one supervision at least every two weeks in their first six months of employment (NMS 28.2).