

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Lucy Ansell
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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 is a semi-detached three storey property in a residential area. There is a basement that is designated as the registered manager's office. The house is situated very close to the town centre and all the local amenities are easy to access.

There is a main line rail connection, shops, cinema, sports facilities, parks and the beach within a five minute walk. All health services are available locally.

The home is registered to accommodate and care for up to three young people and young people aged between eight and 17 years on admission. The home provides medium- to long-term residential care. At the time of this inspection all bedrooms were occupied.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced key inspection. This is a strong service with four outstanding outcome areas. Children and young people's welfare is enhanced by the excellent relationships that exist between staff and children and young people. It is complemented by the therapeutic work being completed. Health care is very well managed and this home ensures safeguarding procedures and practice are robust. The individual outcomes for the children and young people are very positive and a lot of work has been completed on helping older young people manage the transition into independence. Due to changes in staffing, the home has not yet achieved the target of having 80% of all care staff with National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The home does not formalise its complaints procedure with the young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager was asked to ensure staff did not commence work in the home until their Criminal Records Bureau disclosure was in place. This is now strictly adhered to by the company and ensures robust safeguarding of the young people. The home was asked to ensure that complaints raised by young people are addressed following the home's policy and procedures. This is now being fully met, but as an additional safeguard a recommendation has been made to ensure a formal letter is sent to the young people to ensure they fully understood the outcome. The home was also asked to ensure that 80% of the staff team are qualified at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level three in Caring for Children and Young People. The remaining staff are ready to be enrolled on the course as

have now finished their six-month probation period and so will be attending the appropriate training as a course becomes available.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people are provided with a healthy, balanced diet. Fresh fruit is readily available and home-cooked meals are generally provided. Young people's preferences are sought and any foods relating to cultural backgrounds may be provided. Staff are trained in food hygiene.

Children and young people live in a healthy environment where their health and emotional care needs are met. The comprehensive individual health care plans ensure their health needs are closely monitored and promoted. The home ensures specialist healthcare arrangements are in place and encourages children and young people to attend all health appointments. They also receive advice and support regarding a range of other health care issues to help promote their well-being and safety. The home accesses additional therapeutic support for all the children and young people.

Safe systems are in place for the administration and storage of medication. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and updated, and guidance is available for staff. Staff undertake medication training which is competency checked and there is staff on every shift who have a first aid award.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people confirm that staff always knock on doors to seek invitation before entering bedrooms. They also value that they can keep their rooms secure by having their own key. Care files are securely stored in the office and staff receive clear and explicit information with regards to confidentiality and the sharing of sensitive information throughout their induction period.

Children and young people know how to make representations regarding complaints and are actively encouraged to do so through a variety of ways. Written records detail the nature, investigation process and outcome; children and young people are encouraged to sign detailing their levels of satisfaction at the end of the process. However there is no formal process for the children and young people that details the outcome.

Children and young people can be assured of being well protected against possible sources of harm and abuse. All staff receive regular, ongoing safeguarding training and implement the home's clear procedures in practice. The organisation has dedicated safeguarding officers who are all social work trained and retain a lead role across all of the homes. Staff are vigilant in their approach to safeguarding and

report concerns swiftly.

The same robust approach applies to countering bullying, whereby staff are proactive in the first instance through ongoing discussions with the children and young people. Those spoken with confirm that bullying is not an issue in the house. Individual risk assessments and behaviour management plans readily identify a child or young person's vulnerability, high staffing levels ensures the safety of the children and young people is a priority.

Staff know what to do in the event of a child or young person being absent or missing from the home. Individual risk assessments describe the actions to take and these clearly detail each individual's risk factors. Written records of such incidents describe the action taken, and the content of the discussion held upon the child or young person's return.

Staff are keen to promote positive behaviour and conduct this through good role modelling and the use of rewards. Where unacceptable behaviour is exhibited, explicitly clear guidance is in place with regards to the use of permissible sanctions. In the event of extreme and dangerous conduct, the guidance on the use of approved physical restraint techniques is equally clear. Staff receive accredited training on this. Written records of such interventions are clear and comprehensive and contain clear evidence of being robustly monitored and evaluated.

Staff interact positively with the children and young people, opting to use diffusing and de-escalation techniques as their preferred option. They are also mindful of the positive aspects of keeping the children and young people engaged in activities which prevent boredom and the opportunity to create negative situations for themselves. Written records demonstrate a low level use of sanctions and restraints and this further supports the home's aim to create a safe, relaxed environment which positively impacts upon those living there.

Children and young people live in a physical environment which provides good levels of safety and security. Routine health and safety checks are being undertaken and clearly recorded, and the home possesses the required insurance cover. Children and young people are conversant with the fire evacuation procedure; this is taught as a priority to all newcomers, including staff, and it is regularly practised.

Robust recruitment practices serve to protect children and young people. New staff are thoroughly vetted before their employment commences and this includes an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure. Personnel files are in good general order. The children and young people will sit on the recruitment panel and have a clear say on staff recruitment. Visitors to the home are closely monitored, with their identity and the purpose of their visit clearly verified before gaining entry; and they do not have unsupervised access to children or young people or the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The children and young people living at the home receive individual support and guidance when they need it, from all members of the team. They say that staff are always there for them and one young person commented "they had turned his life around". Children and young people have individual one-to-one support through the use of key working sessions, care plans, planning and review meetings. These ensure that they are supported and encouraged to achieve good outcomes. The children and young people are encouraged and nurtured to become involved in the home's social group as well as to develop friendships outside of the home. They are encouraged to develop their individual identity with regard to their background and sense of self through key working sessions and through the relationships they have made with the staff group.

Education is actively promoted and all children and young people are in full-time education either in local schools or within the home's own school. Staff support the children and young people with a 24-hour curriculum and support the school with good communication, regular meetings and reinforcing homework and school rules. School reports and educational correspondence are held in children and young people's files.

The children and young people are encouraged to engage in individual as well as group leisure activities to help them develop their skills and self-confidence. Children and young people said that staff help them to pursue their interests. Activities undertaken and enjoyed include swimming, boxing, youth clubs, go karting, football and the cinema. The children and young people are encouraged to be active and make full use of the leisure facilities and local community. The older boys have earned unsupervised free time and have public transport plans which enables them to have more independence.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Children and young people's placement plans include assessments and details of individual needs. The staff then write a comprehensive care plan of how these needs will be met. Children and young people are encouraged to be involved in the development of their care plan. The monthly progress reports and key worker reports that are sent to social workers are of a very high standard. Risk assessment format has recently been changed and are now comprehensive and robust with the information. Care plans are regularly updated and reviewed. Formal reviews are undertaken and the children and young people are enabled to contribute and attend these reviews.

The home promotes and encourages the children and young people to maintain or to set up new contacts with family members, where this is appropriate. The home

encourages family members to engage fully in the children and young people's lives, for example, coming to the home if appropriate. There are clear records and reports regarding contact. Contact arrangements are reviewed on a regular basis and information is shared with relevant professionals.

Children and young people are encouraged and supported to make their own decisions. Regular consultation is undertaken with young people. They said that staff listen to them and that there is plenty of opportunity for them to speak out in-house meetings or to individual staff. Key worker sessions are held daily; and a strength of the home is the relationships between staff and children and young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

All young people that reach the appropriate age undertake pathway planning with staff. Pathway plans are created to assess the young people's current independence skills and assist them in developing or learning new skills. All children and young people are encouraged to choose their own clothes and they are able to express choice in what they buy for themselves. Staff are mindful of the children and young people's wishes to dress as individuals and express themselves.

The home is maintained to a good standard and provides comfortable accommodation. Children and young people are able to request that their bedrooms be decorated in the colours and style of their choice. Staff will consider any reasonable request and endeavour to meet the wishes of the children and young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity in this home is good. The home promotes staff and children and young people's awareness of issues of discrimination, through company policies, training and discussions. Working practices and company ideology show that every one is a valued individual with the right to respect and positive self image. The home's Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the care and services it provides for the children and young people that are accommodated. The Statement of Purpose is reviewed regularly to reflect any changes in the home and the last review was completed in July 2010.

All staff members receive supervision within recommended timescales. Supervision is recorded and staff address appropriate areas of their practice and care of the children and young people. All staff receive a yearly appraisal. There are suitably trained staff, with high staffing levels to meet the children and young people's needs. The staff team at the home are an experienced and committed group, with a good mix of genders and ages, who successfully promote positive outcomes for the children and young people in their care.

The manager and management support structure ensure the delivery of good quality care to the children and young people who live in this home. In the event of an emergency or absence of the manager, the home has an on-call system, which also operates an out of hours support service. There are seven staff members which have completed their National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at level three. Three of the remaining staff will complete this as soon as a place becomes available and two further staff have almost completed their training. All staff receive mandatory training in core areas of practice and refresher training is ongoing for all staff members.

Monthly visits are made to the home by a Regulation 33 visitor who is independent of the home's management. Following these visits the Regulation 33 visitor compiles a report of the findings and produces an action plan for the manager and company.

The registered person of the home monitors and signs the home's records at least once a month, to identify any patterns or issues requiring action and the necessary action is taken to address this. Each young person has a private and secure record.

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):

- ensure all complaints are followed up by a letter to the young person (NMS 16.1)
- ensure that 80% of the staff team are qualified at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. (NMS 29.5)