

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
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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 home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people of both sexes, aged between 11 and 16 years, who may have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home accepts both planned and emergency placements. Young people are admitted to the home on a short-term basis while an assessment of their needs is undertaken. After completion of this assessment, young people either return to live with their families or move on to alternative placements.

The home is a two storey, detached house. The ground floor accommodation includes a lounge, a dining room, a kitchen and an activities room, which is located in an annexe. The young people's single bedrooms are on the first floor, together with shower and toilet facilities. There is an enclosed garden and a separate car parking area.

Five young people currently live in this home. All were present and contributed to the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is a good service and provides good outcomes in all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas. Young people benefit from good relationships with staff who provide clear guidance and act as positive role models. Young people are supported to maintain healthy diets and actively involved in the planning, budgeting, shopping and preparation of meals to support them with planning for independence. Young people are supported to attend education to enable them to have the opportunity for pursuing their chosen careers. The home works closely with a range of outside agencies in order to meet the full range of young people's needs. Staff are supported by an experienced manager and have the opportunity to further develop their skills through ongoing training.

The home is showing some signs of wear and tear throughout the building including furnishings and décor. Staff support ongoing maintenance within budget resources.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the Registered Manager was required to ensure that there were clear procedures in place to notify appropriately any significant events as identified in Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Systems are in place to ensure that notifications are appropriately made as required. The

recommendation made in relation to room searches has been addressed. There are clear procedures in place and these are known to staff and young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff at the home ensure that the health care needs of the young people are identified as part of the initial referral process and these needs are clearly identified within individual placement plans. This enables young people to receive appropriate care and support to have these needs met. Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician and are encouraged and supported to visit as needed. Staff are proactive in promoting health care needs and provide information to young people regarding health, healthy eating, smoking cessation and exercise.

The home has clear and comprehensive policies and procedures with regard to the storage and administration of medication. Staff responsible for the administration of medication have received training to ensure that they have the necessary skills to undertake this task, therefore promoting the welfare of the young people.

Staff work with young people to plan menus that provide choice and healthy options. Copies of menus are maintained and these clearly reflect the young people's choice. Young people say that the food is good and they enjoy being involved in the planning and shopping and preparation of food.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are aware of the importance in promoting privacy, dignity and confidentiality for young people. All documentation is securely stored and computers are password protected. Young people have their own bedrooms that they are able to lock, these locks can be overridden in the case of an emergency. The young people's guide contains information about the home's policy should it be necessary for their rooms to be searched. Young people are provided with access to a private telephone and given an allowance towards the cost of their mobile phones. Young people's privacy is respected.

Information about how to make a complaint is provided within the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide. Staff also ensure that young people understand how to make a complaint and provide access to independent advocates. They are also able to raise any issues or concerns through the use of 'I want to know' concerns forms or in their meetings. The young people say that they feel confident that any complaint that they make will be addressed.

Staff receive training on the promotion of the welfare and safety of the young people. This includes responding to any unauthorised absence appropriately and supporting young people with any issues they may have with regards bullying. Staff

support and work well with the young people helping them look at bullying and its effects on themselves and others. Young people who are absent from the home without permission are protected in accordance with written procedures and are responded to positively on their return. Records are maintained of when incidents have occurred. Good links are in place with the local police service and there is a clear protocol in respect of involving the police.

The focus for managing young people's behaviour is based upon the promotion and reward of positive outcomes and actions. The use of sanctions has reduced by this change of focus and approach by staff. Training in behaviour management, including de-escalation techniques and the use of physical interventions, is provided to staff together with written guidance. The use of restraint is rare which supports the training and positive approaches used by the staff in the home. Records show that young people's comments are sought and recorded. Records of sanctions and restraints are monitored by the manager. The home's rewards system is much appreciated by the young people and is linked towards them achieving individual targets and goals.

Risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises, grounds and activities and a system of review is in place. The fire detection system is tested regularly and fire evacuation drills take place at different times. This ensures that young people are aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire. However, a night time drill has not recently taken place to ensure that young people know what to do in the event of a fire taking place at night.

Suitable procedures are in place for the recruitment and checking of staff. Records of visitors are maintained and proof of identification is requested where appropriate. These practices reduce potential risks to the welfare of children living at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children receive individualised support in line with their needs and wishes, including support from external professionals. Staff encourage and support children to be involved in discussions about their daily lives and plans for their future. Young people have access to persons independent of the home and are provided with their contact details. A key worker system is operated. However, young people are able to approach staff, of their choosing, with any personal worries or concerns they have. Young people say that they feel that they receive a good level of support from staff and this was evident during the inspection.

The involvement of all children in how the home functions is promoted and staff nurture positive friendships between children. The individuality of children is acknowledged and they are encouraged to pursue individual activities and interests outside of the home where possible. These include trips to local leisure and sports facilities and local shopping areas.

Staff are very positive in their approach to education and its value for children. Active practical and emotional support is provided to children to encourage them to attend school or other forms of education. The home has developed strong links with the looked after children education support service to ensure that the young people are provided with the most appropriate educational placement to enhance their educational achievements and outcomes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are usually able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. As the home takes emergency placements, some young people arrive at very short notice. The needs of the young person concerned and the likely effect of their admission on the existing group are discussed before an admission decision is made. Existing residents are informed of new placements wherever possible and new residents are provided with an information pack informing them about the home.

Young people have detailed placement plans which set out how their individual needs are to be met on a day-to-day basis. Sampled plans evidence consultation with children in the compilation and review of their placement plans. Staff are aware of the importance of ensuring that the plan is kept under review.

Young people are supported with their individual contact arrangements and these are appropriately recorded. Any restrictions on contact for the protection of the child are made clear.

Staff encourage young people to contribute their ideas and suggestions in relation to the day-to-day running of the home. This includes menu planning, activities, furnishing and décor. Regular young people's meetings are held to further encourage and support young people to contribute their views to how the home functions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The daily life of the home provides a range of opportunities for young people, appropriate to their age, to develop knowledge and skills within an emotionally supportive environment. For example, helping to shop for food, clothes and toiletries, help with cooking and general tidying of their room. Tasks within the home are shared between male and female members of staff and emphasis is placed on the nurturing role of both male and female staff; this promotes positive role modelling.

The home provides each young person with their own bedroom that they are supported to personalise. At the time of the inspection, some young people were planning colour schemes for their rooms which are planned to be redecorated in the near future. Communal areas of the home are showing signs of wear and tear. Staff

endeavour to undertake some areas of redecoration and achieved this when the young people were on their annual holiday. However, they are limited in doing this due to the size of the building. Temporary repairs have been made to sofas in the lounge where the fabric of sofas have been ripped. Ongoing plans for refurbishment are in place balanced within budget constraints. The home benefits from support of a part-time cleaner to maintain the homes cleanliness but currently has a vacancy for a part-time maintenance person and this is evident in some of the outstanding maintenance work.

Externally, there is a garden with grassed and hard surface areas providing opportunities for a range of recreational activities, including football and basketball. Young people have also been supported to develop a small vegetable patch to enable them to grow vegetables for the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a Statement of Purpose that contains information about the aims and objectives of the home. This is reviewed on an annual basis or sooner if there has been any changes to staffing or facilities. This document is made available to parents, carers and placing authorities to enable them to have information about the home. There is also a children's guide in place. This is provided to the young people; it details the services that the home provides. They are also provided with an information pack as part of the introduction to the home. Young people say that this is very helpful and informative.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to young people's diversity, such as, identity, race, culture and religion. Staff have a good understanding of the importance of promotion of equality and diversity and the impact this has on young people. This ensures that the home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

An induction programme is in place for all new staff and covers basic training, including child protection, promotion of positive behaviours and physical intervention techniques. Staff receive formal supervision on a regular basis and staff spoken with find this very useful. In addition, informal supervision is provided and staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities. Staffing levels at the home are good and the staff team provide a consistent level of staffing for the young people. This ensures that young people benefit from a well supported and stable staff team and are provided with continuity of care from members of staff that they know and have developed positive relationships with.

There are quality assurance systems to monitor the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose so that standards of care are maintained. This includes the manager monitoring the necessary records and visits to the home by a safeguarding manager from the authority to undertake comprehensive assessments of how the

home is functioning. Reports from these visits are maintained at the home and provide information about how well the home is delivering care and support to young people living there. They enable the manager to have an overview of how the home is running and bring to light any issues that require action to be taken to improve the care and support provided for young people. However, copies of these reports are not consistently sent to Ofsted on a monthly basis as required.

Young people's care files are detailed and maintained to a good standard. All staff at the home are required to read these files to ensure that they have the appropriate information and knowledge to provide individual support to 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):

- ensure that the interior of the home is in a good state of decorative repair and there is a satisfactory maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment. (NMS 24.3)
- include the provision of a night time fire drill (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that a copy of the monthly Regulation 33 report is sent to Ofsted on a monthly basis. (NMS 32.1)