

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Blesky
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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 up to six young people. The home has the appearance of a large family home with little to distinguish it from other homes in the neighbourhood. The house is in a residential street in a seaside town and close to shops, community facilities and the beach. There is adequate space in the home for the young people that are accommodated and the home has a rear garden for young people to use.

Summary

This is an unannounced key inspection. This is a good service in most respects with one satisfactory feature. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the good relationships that exist between staff and young people, and between young people and their peers. Young people are confident and understand both their rights and responsibilities. Young people's views and opinions are valued and young people are encouraged by thoughtful and insightful practices to express their views. Relationships are warm and supportive and young people are encouraged to take some responsibility for their actions as opposed to more punitive methods of control.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the Registered Manager was asked to keep adequate records regarding young people that went missing from the home or were absent without permission. The manager was also asked to ensure that when young people are given sanctions for less positive behaviour, accurate and detailed records are kept of the incident requiring the sanction.

The manager has reviewed the procedure dealing with absence and missing person's and detailed and comprehensive records are now kept. Records include all circumstances of the event and detail the effort staff have made to ascertain the reasons why the young person left the home.

The manager has also reviewed the recording of sanctions and although there is a notable improvement, some records are still rather vague and further review is necessary in this area. The steps that the manager has taken have improved practices in the home from the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from a choice of nutritious and healthy meals. Young people are able to express their individual choices of meals in discussion with staff members. The young people's meetings also provide a more formal opportunity for young people to discuss meals and mealtimes.

All staff undertake training in healthy living and food and diet to ensure they are suitably knowledgeable about nutrition. Staff also encourage young people to choose healthy options when planning menus and mealtimes. Young people have the opportunity to help prepare and cook meals under staff supervision. Young people say that they enjoy their meals and have plenty of choices of nice things to eat.

Staff members ensure that young people's health needs are met by comprehensive and well managed healthcare planning. Each young person has a dedicated file, which contains his or her historic, current and planned health interventions.

Young people's health is effectively monitored and all young people are registered with the core health services soon after they become resident in the home; this includes a doctor, dentist, and optician.

Appointments are regularly attended by young people and staff also strive to ensure that young people's diverse needs can be met within healthcare arrangements by discussion with the young person. It was noted that one young person has a medical condition, which is being regularly monitored on a numeric chart. Although monitoring is being well maintained, staff are unclear as to when they should be concerned, what action to take or indeed when to take it. Differing and diverse cultures are promoted in the home and staff are aware of the need to provide positive role models to support this.

Access to medication and drug storage provides both safety and security and all access to the medicine cabinet is strictly monitored. Robust recording is maintained for all administrations and all staff undertake training in the handling of medications. It was noted that first aid equipment was not being stored hygienically and the containers for first aid equipment were not good enough.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff ensure that young people are treated with respect and sensitivity. Staff are aware of the need for confidentiality in matters of information sharing and young people's records. Bedrooms are only entered after staff have knocked and requested entry and staff are particularly sensitive regarding matters of washing and dressing. Young people say that staff look after them and give them privacy and time alone when they request it.

Complaints are infrequent in this home, but if a young person wishes to make a complaint or representation, there are well maintained systems for managing and recording this. Complaints are all overseen by the manager and any young person complaining is kept up to date with the progress of a complaint. Young people say that if they are unhappy they tell staff, they say staff are quick to respond and address any matter.

The home maintains robust and effective safeguarding and child protection procedures and practices. All staff receive mandatory training in these matters and an experienced child protection coordinator is appointed by the company. The home's safeguarding procedures mirror those of the local authority. Responses to safeguarding matters and recording of any such incidents is well managed. The home also operates an out of hours and on call service where advice or extra staff support can be accessed.

The home maintains effective procedures to address any occurrences of bullying. Young people say that they feel safe and that staff would be quick to resolve any bullying in the home. The home maintains a countering bullying procedure and associated training for staff. Any incidents that appear as bullying are treated with specific focus from other day to day disputes. Matters of bullying are then investigated and staff members then have the opportunity to look at the more complex elements of bullying.

Well managed missing person procedures protect young people from risks. Robust procedures address the searching, reporting, and recovery of any young person that is missing or absent without agreement. The home has agreed protocols with the local police to manage situations when young people are absent without agreement and detailed guidance is in place for all staff members. Any cases of concern are reported to the home's out of hours service. When young people return from being missing, the staff meet with the young person to try to determine the reasons for the episode. In cases that are uncharacteristic or of greater concern, an independent visitor will meet and formally interview the young person and provide additional support.

Behaviour is well managed in the home and staff work hard to engage with young people rather than use the more punitive methods of control. When sanctions are given all episodes are recorded and provide details of the incident and the sanction imposed. Young people are encouraged to discuss their actions both at the time of the incident and following some reflection.

Although records are generally well maintained it was noted that some records regarding sanction and intervention were rather vague and it was not easy to determine the details of the action requiring the sanction or intervention.

Risk assessment is generally well organised and there is clear evidence that the individual and more diverse needs of the young people are considered in all assessments. The consideration of young people's behaviour and the impact of environmental factors, provide comprehensive and high standards of assessment in most cases. However, it was noted that vehicles enter the property in close proximity to the front door. The risk assessment had not yet been completed in this area of increased risk.

All staff in the home are rigorously checked to ensure that they are appropriate to work with the young people. All new staff undergo strict and comprehensive employment and recruitment checks and all necessary references from previous employers are gathered. All visitors to the home must identify themselves and sign in and out of the building. No visitor is permitted to have unsupervised access to the building or the young people. Young people are kept safe and their welfare is protected by these rigorous procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All young people benefit from individual support and guidance from the staff members. Staff spend time with the young people discussing both day to day matters and matters related specifically to their care plans. Support that is more formal is provided during key working sessions when the staff members meet individually with the young people. Key working sessions seek to look in more depth at the progress of the young person's placement and also provide effective one to one support. Key workers typically liaise with the young person's school, family, and friends and have more detailed knowledge of the young person.

Each young person undertakes a comprehensive educational assessment along with the planning for his or her personal educational plan. Appropriate schools and education is then planned for each young person and reviewed at statutory planning and review meetings.

Young people are supported in completing their homework and extra curricular activities by all staff. Study areas are provided within the young people's bedrooms and the home has a computer and access to the local library.

The senior staff member confirmed that a more formal study area and programme of support is being planned for the future. It was noted that one young person awaiting formal education had already been provided with a structured programme by the home, which is of credit to the staff.

Young people are encouraged to identify a beneficial personal hobby or interest and this will be supported by the home. The home provides both practical and financial support to any reasonable request and young people confirmed that there is plenty to do. In addition to provision made in the home, which include a pool table, table tennis and air hockey, the home organises structured events in the community for all the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Care planning and review is of very good quality. Each young person's care plan, provided by the placing authority is articulated into the home's placement plan. This plan considers the services and support that can be provided by the home to meet the young person's needs. In addition to this, each young person has a 24 hour management plan. This details an average day for each young person and seeks to make explicit how staff may best meet young people's individual and more diverse needs. These plans are insightful and very comprehensive. Plans detail the support to be given to a young person throughout the whole day from their routines of getting up in the morning to going to bed in the evening.

Young people are well supported in their care planning and development by comprehensive review. The home's staff, typically the key worker, provide a very detailed and thoughtful review report. This report details the young person's progress and relates these milestones to the Every Child Matters outcomes. Reports are of high standard and provide the reviewing process with a wealth of salient necessary information.

Young people are encouraged to achieve and maintain good quality contact with their friends and family. Staff members demonstrate support through key working with young people and providing the planning and transportation to achieve contact. The home provides finance for accommodation in a local hotel for parents that need to travel a greater distance to the home. Supervised contact is well documented and the records provide both observational details and some useful analysis of the contact session. Young people are further supported both prior and post contact by their key worker to ensure young people are able to express any views. However, it was noted that specific arrangements for supervised contact in one case had not been well managed. This had left the staff in a position, which was somewhat confused. Detailed and clear guidance could not be evidenced in this specific arrangement.

Arrangements are made for all young people becoming resident, or moving on, from the home.

Effective children's meetings occur regularly in the home to ensure that the young people are able to make both their individual and collective views known. Meeting are typically arranged around mealtimes and these meetings are recorded in detail. Meetings evidence that young people's views and comments are taken seriously and acted upon where this is appropriate.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Leaving care and independency planning has been started for one eligible young person. The home carries out an assessment and then seeks to devise a programme of support to enable and encourage young people to learn the necessary life skills. Procedures and guidance are in place and staff all receive training in promoting independency skills. However, it was noted that the programme of support had not been planned or adapted to address a recent assessment of the young person and independency training had prematurely ended. This had not left the young person with adequate opportunities to achieve in this area.

All young people are able to express their individuality in their choices of clothing, dress, and decoration of their bedrooms. Young people say that staff will help them choose their clothes and take them shopping for personal items. Young people's bedrooms are thoughtfully decorated and the young people are encouraged to respect their personal and communal spaces.

The home is very well maintained and presents as a large, well furnished family home. Maintenance standards are typically high and some minor outstanding repairs were already scheduled for attention. Decoration and the quality of the home were also of a very good standard. The home has been maintained thoughtfully with careful consideration for the young people resident there.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are treated as individuals and their care planning provides for their particular needs. All young people have the opportunity to express choice and the staff in the home promote and support young people's expression of diversity.

The home maintains a detailed and comprehensive Statement of Purpose and a children's guide, which accurately describe what the home sets out to do for the young people it accommodates. The Statement of Purpose document is reviewed regularly and more specifically, if there are changes within the home or services provided. All staff are appropriately supervised and receive supervision support from senior staff in accordance with the national minimum standards.

All staff receive an annual appraisal of their performance and any training, which is identified, is provided. Staff are well supported by effective management in the home. Staff meetings are held regularly and the staff use this opportunity appropriately to discuss the young people and the more general operation of the home. All staffing shifts are managed by senior staff to ensure that there is an appropriate skills balance and the needs of the young people can be met.

In the absence of the Registered Manager, a senior staff member is appointed and the home is also supported by an on call and out of hours service. There are sufficient numbers of appropriately experienced staff to meet the needs of the young people. There are twelve staff in the home, six of whom have completed their National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at level 3 or equivalent. This home has not currently achieved the 80% ratio of trained staff in accordance with the national minimum standards.

All staff receive appropriate training commensurate with their role. Staff members must undertake mandatory training in core areas of practice and this includes, safeguarding training and physical intervention training. Refresher training is also providing for all staff to ensure that they remain up to date and knowledgeable about current practice.

Training is also available when more diverse or specific needs are to be addressed. Staff members confirmed that any training needs can be raised in supervision sessions and they are well supported by the supervision process.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure adequate and suitable planning for first aid and appropriate first aid equipment is provided within the home (NMS 13.5)
- ensure each child has a clear written health plan within their placement plan covering health monitoring required of staff (NMS 12.2)
- ensure positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards (NMS 26.1)
- ensure contact arrangements are discussed at the time of the child's admission and subsequently as required, and that these are also detailed in the placement plan and staff guidance with any restrictions on contact for the protection of the child being clear (NMS 4.2)
- ensure that there is a comprehensive plan for young people preparing to leave care and to move into independent or semi independent living (NMS 6.1)
- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at level 3 or equivalent. (NMS 29.5)