

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 up to three young people from 10 years old up to 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties, or learning disabilities.

It is a large house near the centre of the town. The location of the house enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres, the beach and parks.

There are currently three young people living in the home and they did not take 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 satisfactory service in most respects with some good features in enjoying and achieving. The home promotes and safeguards young people's welfare well. Young people's needs are clearly identified and well supported. There is evidence of positive outcomes for young people relating to their education, healthy lifestyles, preparing for adult life and dealing with problems.

Young people are looked after by a group of competent people with the skills and experiences suitable to be caring for vulnerable young people. Staff demonstrate the ability to work with other professionals to promote and safeguard young people and to effectively plan their care and support.

The quality of recording does not fully meet the required standards consistently. Young people's written placement, health and behaviour plans and the records for medication are not always comprehensive and up to date. As a result, they do not give a precise picture of young people's needs and the support they require. Also, the records do show young people's views about the sanctions they receive.

Young people do not have a varied and healthy diet. Although the quality of the accommodation is of a reasonable standard, every young person does not have curtains, a wardrobe and containers to put their toiletries and toothbrushes in the bathroom. Also, the gas installation has not been checked for over a year to ensure it is working in good order.

In addition, recently staff have had few opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through training.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people do not have varied and balanced meals that fully meet their dietary needs. The majority of meals are processed foods, such as burgers, pizzas, sausages and chips. Young people eat very few vegetables or foods from different cultures.

Staff have some understanding of nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They offer young people the opportunity to have healthy meals, to help plan menus, to go shopping for food and to prepare meals. Young people's food choices and preferences are always taken into account, but unfortunately they are not choosing to eat healthier meals.

Young people's physical and emotional health is promoted. Young people have easy access to community health services. They are all registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Staff monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, by encouraging them to attend routine health checks and by ensuring they get medical treatment when they are unwell.

Young people have regular health and development checks and staff ensure that recommendations coming from the assessments are completed. For example, staff have arranged for young people to have all the required immunisations. The home has good links with specialist health services, such as child and adolescent mental health services, to make sure that young people get suitable support with specific health issues.

Staff often encourage young people to take an interest in looking after their health and to lead healthy lives. Staff actively discourage young people from smoking, alcohol and drugs. Young people have opportunities to discuss these issues openly and honestly with staff and other young people. Staff make sure young people have appropriate information, support and advice about a range of social and health issues, including sexual health, diet, smoking, drugs, alcohol, to promote healthy lifestyles. The home also has good links with community services enabling young people to access support, information and advice on these issues.

However, not all young people have up to date and comprehensively written health plans that outline all their general and specific health needs and clearly show how these needs are being met.

The home has suitable policies and procedures for managing medication to safeguard young people's welfare. It has the facilities to securely store medication. However, the home's records of any medication taken by young people are not accurately kept in every case. For example, some records were not completed in full, to show if young people had completed a course of prescribed medicine or had refused to take them.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The home promotes young people's privacy. They have single bedrooms with their own keys and are able to wash in private. The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and to spend time to be alone when they wish. Young people make and receive telephone calls in private. Staff respect young people's privacy and confidentiality consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. The home keeps information about young people securely stored and ensures that it is managed confidentially.

The home has a clear complaints procedure that is easily accessible to young people, their families, social workers and people in the community. The home responds appropriately to complaints. It takes all complaints seriously, takes action to look into concerns promptly and attempts to address issues urgently.

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 staff have received suitable training. Staff are knowledgeable about the procedures and put them in to 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 detailed 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. Staff provide young people with good advice about personal safety.

Young people are protected from bullying by strong policies and practice. Staff ensure that young people know that any form of bullying is not acceptable. They are fully aware for the potential for bullying and encourage young people to talk to them if they are unhappy or worried about anything. They provide young people with a good level of supervision and are vigilant.

Staff encourage young people not to go missing. 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. Young people are welcomed back and staff check out if they are well and have any worries.

Young people have individual behaviour plans designed to encourage socially acceptable behaviour. The plans do not always specify clearly how staff are helping to promote positive behaviour. For example, one plan states that staff should use rewards and incentives to encourage good behaviour, but does not specify what rewards should be used.

Staff view young people in a positive light and encourage acceptable behaviour by talking to young people and building relationships with them. Staff make sure young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and have a clear understanding of the consequences for any unacceptable behaviour.

The home's records of sanctions and restraints show that they are used appropriately in line with the home's procedures and are routinely reviewed by the manager and provider. Restraints are never used and sanctions are seldom used, usually relating to when young people do not come in on time. The records generally contain the required information. However, young people do not have the opportunity to record their views and sign their names against records kept by the home on sanctions.

Young people's health, welfare and safety is protected by comprehensive policies and risk assessments. The vast majority of the necessary health and safety checks, including fire drills, are routinely carried out to maintain a safe environment. However, the gas boiler and installation have not been inspected within the last 12 months to check if it continues to be in good working order. The recruitment and selection of people wishing to work 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. Also, the home has strong systems in place for vetting and supervising visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are clearly identified in placement plans, which are put into practice to a good standard. The home can meet a wide range of young people's potential needs, including healthy lifestyles, gender, emotional support, behaviour, personal care and safety. In addition, the home has well-established and effective links with a variety of helping services, such as Response and child and adolescent mental health services to ensure that young people have full access to the right support to meet their specific needs, including those relating to equality and diversity.

Young people's education is actively encouraged and supported. Their placement plans provide details about their learning needs and how these are supported. However, young people do not have personal education plans setting out a record of their education achievements, needs and aspirations.

The home's daily routines support young people's attendance at college. Staff provide transport to ensure young people are able to attend. Staff work extremely well with young people, Connexions and local colleges, to identify suitable education and training opportunities for young people in areas that they are interested in and meets their needs.

Staff actively encourage young people to enjoy their spare time and to take part in leisure activities and to follow interests, such as gaming, sports and films at home and in the community. Young people spend a lot of time socialising with friends in the local area.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. Staff put the plans into practice and keep records about young people's progress and experiences. However, young people's placement plans are not always kept up to date to reflect changes in their needs and the support provided. For example, one placement plan did not show the current arrangements for the young person's education and training.

Young people's placements are reviewed regularly by the placing authority to make sure that they are up to date and continue to meet their needs. Staff and young people contribute fully to the discussion and the plans for their future. In this way, young people's views about their lives are taken into account.

The home encourages young people to have regular contact with their families and actively facilitates 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 good at helping young people settle in, 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 encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They are involved in decisions about 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.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are prepared for adult life. They have individual leaving care plans that identify their needs and the support to assist them to develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they require. The plans address their needs including personal care, education, accommodation and finances. Young people routinely take part in the daily tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, laundry, cleaning, handling money and following a budget. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future. Also, staff encourage them to develop their personal care, organisational and social skills

Young people receive suitable allowances to meet their personal needs. However, they are not encouraged to sign the records to show that they have received their money. This would be a good way to encourage young people to take responsibility for their own money. Young people are encouraged to express their individuality in the way they dress. They are always involved in choosing how to spend their pocket money and allowances for toiletries and clothing. Staff provide good advice around understanding money and choosing suitable clothing.

Young people live in a homely and comfortable environment, which is maintained, decorated and furnished to a reasonable standard. Young people have personalised their bedrooms to reflect their interests and individual tastes, such as posters of their favourite football teams and family photographs. However, one of the bedrooms did not have suitable window coverings to preserve young people's privacy and another bedroom did not have a wardrobe to enable young people to hang their clothes up. In addition, in the upstairs bathroom there are no storage facilities for toiletries, toothbrushes and toothpaste. As a result, young people's toothbrushes are left lying on the side of the wash basin. This does not provide a homely feel to the room or encourage young people to promote their personal hygiene.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home is generally well run, with a clear commitment to providing good child care practice to vulnerable young people.

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. Also, 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. However, the statement of purpose has not been updated to take into account recent staff changes.

Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know who they may 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 recommended timescales, to ensure they are suitably supported and guided in promoting and safeguarding young people's welfare. Also, team meetings take place 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.

The staff team reflects the gender and cultural backgrounds of young people living in the home. Young people are looked after by a competent and qualified staff team with a wide range of skills and experience that matches the needs of young people living in the home reasonably well. 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. However, the staffing arrangements for night time have not been reviewed to take into account the recent increase in the number of young people and the compatibility of the group as a whole.

The home has a suitable training programme that covers the needs of young people and the skills and knowledge required by staff to effectively do their jobs. However, training opportunities for staff have been limited recently because training events have been cancelled and rearranged for later in the year.

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 and take action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare.

The home's written records provide a picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. However, the quality of the record keeping is not consistently good. Some health and placement plans and direct work reports are not comprehensive or up to date. This is important to ensure that young people and staff are very clear about how their needs are being met.

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	keep the statement of purpose and children's guide under review and revise where appropriate and notify Ofsted of any such revision within 28 days (Regulation 5.a & b)	7 September 2009
10	ensure that young people accommodated in the children's home are provided with food which is wholesome, nutritious and sufficiently varied (Regulation 13.1.a)	24 August 2009
24	ensure that young people's bedrooms have window coverings suitable to their needs and are equipped with suitable storage facilities, such as wardrobes, for young people's clothes and personal belongings (Regulation 31.8.b).	24 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that each young person has a comprehensive health plan that clearly identifies their health needs and shows how their needs are being met, which is kept up to date and takes into account any changes in their health needs (NMS 12.2)
- ensure that a written record is kept of all medication given to young people, and a record must be kept of when and why prescribed medicines are not administered or refused, when medication ceases and how and when medicines are disposed of (NMS 13.2)
- ensure that young people's behaviour management plans clearly show what measures are being used with individual young people to promote socially acceptable behaviour (NMS 22.1).
- give young people the opportunity to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against records kept by the home on sanctions (NMS 22.14)
- ensure that the gas boiler and installations are inspected at least annually (NMS 26.4)
- ensure that each young person's file contains a copy of their Personal Educational Plan (PEP) setting out a record of their education achievements, needs and aspirations (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that young people's placement plans are monitored and up dated to take into account any changes in young people's needs and the arrangements for meeting them (NMS 2.2)
- encourage young people to sign the records to confirm that they have received their personal allowances and clothing allowances (NMS 11.1)

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- ensure that bathrooms are equipped with suitable storage for young people's toiletries, toothbrushes and toothpaste (NMS 24 & 25)
 - review the number of staff required to be on duty at night and whether they are required to be waking or sleeping (NMS 30.2)
 - ensure staff receive training opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of young people and the purpose of the home (NMS 31.1).