

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.

Young people living at the home 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 children's home with some outstanding features in promoting young people's health, education and emotional well-being, providing young people with the help they need, and making plans for young people's futures. The home meets the regulations and standards very well and provides a friendly, safe and stable environment for young people. The home is very good at seeing young people as individuals and providing them with the right support and services to meet their personal needs.

Young people feel safe and supported. Staff ensure that young people's health is actively promoted and improves through healthy diets and encouraging healthy lifestyles. Staff work very hard to ensure young people are protected from harm and get the help they need.

Young people are looked after by qualified, skilled and competent people. Staff view young people positively and are committed to helping them and meeting their needs. They have a detailed understanding of individual young people's needs and work really hard to find out how best to support them. Staff have been particularly effective at building positive relationships with young people based on respect, affection and honesty. They are, as a result, able to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour and overcome difficulties they may face.

Although the recording of young people's experiences and progress is very good, the records do not show a clear and detailed evaluation of the effectiveness of the behaviour management strategies. This information would assist staff in developing plans for supporting young people when they feel anxious, upset or frustrated.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the home has improved the quality of young people's records. The home's records now provide a comprehensive picture of young people's needs, experiences, progress, and development. Health plans clearly show young people's specific health needs and how they are being effectively met. Medication records are accurately kept to show that young people are getting the help they require. In addition, the home has now clear information

about the arrangements for promoting young people's education and learning. The detailed records provide insight into young people's development and form a basis of planning for young people's futures.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy very healthy and nutritious meals from different cultures that meet their dietary needs. Young people said 'My home has recipes of healthy eating meals like veggie curry, around the house'. Young people's food choices are taken into account, meals are homemade and adventurous, including pork casserole with carrots, broccoli, cauliflower and potatoes; reggae chicken with rice; chicken and pepper fajitas; and minced beef pie, with roast potatoes and carrots.

Staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They encourage young people to find out about healthy meals by fully involving them in the planning and preparation of meals. Young people confirm that they routinely plan meals, go with staff to buy food and are encouraged to help to cook. They also enjoy baking cakes and making bread. Young people are growing their own food, such as tomatoes, chillies and basil; helping them to learn more about where their meals come from. Staff also ensure that young people know how to prepare and store food safely.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being are actively promoted. Young people have easy access to community and specialist health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Information about how young people's general and specific health needs are met are included in comprehensive and up-to-date health plans. These plans also provide a clear picture about how their health needs are being met on a daily basis.

Staff have an excellent understanding of the full range of young people's health needs. Staff support young people's health needs in a considerate and sensitive way. They closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, encouraging them to attend routine health checks, such as going to the dentist and optician. Staff also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment with specific medical problems and when they are feeling unwell. One young person said when I'm feeling poorly 'they ask me if I feel unwell and let me go to bed if I need to.'

Staff always encourage young people to take an active interest in looking after their own health and leading healthy lives. They place a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles. Young people access information about a wide range of health and social issues, including sexual health, smoking, alcohol, drugs, diet and emotional well-being. Young people get excellent information and advice to help them know about the range of different options they have. This enables them to make informed choices about their health.

The home's procedures for managing medication are put into practice to ensure young people's welfare is promoted and protected. Medication is securely stored and staff keep accurate records. Staff are competent and well trained in handling medication and first aid. They make sure that young people only have medication specifically prescribed for them and take it in line with the prescription instructions. Young people keeping and taking their own medication have been assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible to do so.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people live in a safe and secure home environment and are effectively protected from harm. Young people feel safe and said that staff are good at 'keeping me safe and healthy'.

Staff promote young people's dignity and respect young people's privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. Young people have single bedrooms and accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time to be alone when they wish. Information about young people is managed confidentially and held securely in the office.

Staff give protecting young people from harm a high priority. This involves providing young people with excellent advice about personal safety. Young people said 'staff tell me how to keep myself safe'. Staff understand fully their responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Staff are knowledgeable about the home's procedures for responding to concerns about young people's safety. They work effectively with safeguarding agencies to protect young people by sharing information and putting safeguarding plans into practice.

Young people know how to complain and their concerns are taken seriously and addressed. Young people confirmed that they have people they can talk to if they feel unhappy and staff encourage young people to let them know when they have any concerns. Staff ensure that young people are protected from bullying by providing a good level of suitable supervision and suitable guidance. Young people have not experienced bullying and get on well together. Staff work effectively with young people to enable them to develop positive relationships, to deal with disagreements constructively and understand the impact their behaviour has on other people. In this way staff help young people to develop their clear expectations of how they treat, and should be treated by, their friends and families.

Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerability and the risks they face in the community. They work extremely hard to ensure that risks to young people are effectively managed. The home has detailed individual risk assessments and plans for what staff should do if young people go missing and follow them consistently well. Staff encourage and support young people to come in on time and stay in contact with staff by telephone. When young people are late back they are warmly welcomed home.

Staff are very good at encouraging young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour and challenge difficult behaviour constructively. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and the possible consequences of any poor behaviour. Staff view young people in a positive light and encourage acceptable behaviour by praising and rewarding them, talking to them, trying to understand their behaviour and building positive relationships with them. Staff have a good understanding of the issues that influence young people's behaviour, such as emotional difficulties and the impact of separation and loss. These insights enable staff to work well with young people and identify the best ways to help them. Staff also work well with helping and therapeutic services to provide young people with the support they need to manage problems.

Young people's behaviour is very good and as a result punishments, such as sanctions, are used very rarely. Sanctions are only used constructively to deal with serious behaviour. Young people

feel that the rules are fair. Staff keep accurate records of any sanctions used with young people, but do not clearly evaluate how effective the sanctions are at improving young people's behaviour.

Young people live in a safe environment. Staff put into practice a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments to protect young people. For example, 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 recruitment and selection of people working at the home is thorough to make sure young people are protected. For example, before starting work all staff have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks. Also the home has suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are very well-supported, they are able to talk to staff about problems and receive exceptional individual support when they need it. Staff spend a lot of time individually with young people and clearly enjoy working with them. Young people's individual needs are clearly identified in their records and put into practice effectively. There are many excellent examples of staff providing advice and support with a wide range of young people's possible needs, including sexual health and relationships, healthy lifestyles, family relationships, emotional well-being, dealing with feelings and problems and life skills.

Education is actively promoted and plays an important part in the lives of young people. Staff see education as important and have created an environment that encourages young people to learn and develop their confidence and skills. Young people's educational needs are identified in detailed plans and the arrangements for meeting their needs are put into practice effectively. The home's structured daily routine supports young people's attendance. The home has strong links with young people's schools and work effectively together to make sure young people's learning and development needs are met. For example, staff check with school about homework to make sure young people get the help they may need. Young people are well-supported by staff with school and college work. They have plenty of space for study and have the equipment they need to complete their work, such as a personal computer, books, arts and craft materials.

Young people take part in a wide range of activities at home and in the community, including sports, baking, snooker, playing monopoly and computer games, watching DVDs, going to the cinema, and seeing friends. They also go to a variety of cultural and historical events taking place locally that interest them. For example, young people recently went to see a parade of sports cars. Staff find out about young people's interests and work hard to find activities that young people like.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's comprehensive records provide a detailed insight into the individual needs of young people and how their needs are being met. This provides strong evidence that young people live in a service that is able to meet their needs and provide the support they require. Staff keep detailed records about young people's progress and experiences that show clearly how all their needs are being met on a day-to-day basis.

The home and placing authority review young people's placements regularly to make sure that young people continue to get the support they need. Staff work closely with young people, their parents, and the other agencies involved in their lives to monitor their progress, take into account any changes in their lives, and identify the best way to support young people.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They are fully involved in decisions about what food they eat, what they do in their spare time, how the house is decorated and the plans for their future. 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 have suitable regular contact with their families that promotes and safeguards their welfare. Staff work hard to ensure that family contact is a positive experience for young people to help them maintain and build relationships. For example, staff helped young people bake a cake for tea with their parents. Staff are insightful that for young people seeing their families may be difficult and upsetting and provide young people suitable emotional support.

Young people move into the home in a very well-planned and sensitive way. The home gathers detailed information about young people before they move in, to ensure that the home is able to meet their needs and look after them properly. For example, staff get details about young people's likes and preferences from young people's previous carers to help staff to get to know the young person and help them settle in. Staff are good at helping young people feel at home; making sure they know what is expected of them, what to do if they are worried and their way around the local area.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to develop the skills they need for adult life suitable to their age and understanding. They routinely learn skills through taking part in the running of the home, and carrying out tasks, such as baking and cooking, going to the shops, tidying their bedrooms, bringing their washing down and managing money. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene and getting themselves ready for school.

Young people have suitable personal allowances, including money for clothes and toiletries. They choose how to spend their allowances with support and guidance from staff and in this way learn how to manage money effectively. Young people are able express their individuality in how they dress taking into account the season, their age and level of understanding.

Young people live in a comfortable and homely environment that meets their needs. The house is clean, decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people like the accommodation and have personalised the home to reflect their interests and individual tastes. For example, young people have decorated their rooms with posters of their favourite football team and players.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is outstanding. Evidence supports a strong 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 an excellent 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. This includes supporting and encouraging young people to accept and understand other young people's needs and abilities.

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. In addition, 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.

The home is well run by an experienced, qualified and competent manager and staff team. There is a strong commitment to supporting young people and making every effort to ensure young people get the right support they need to make positive progress. Young people are looked after by people with a range of skills and experience that match the needs of young people living in the home 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.

Staff are well-supported and have a very clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful and they receive one-to-one supervision regularly. In addition, team meetings take place every month, to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer. Staff have access to a suitable training programme that comprehensively covers the needs of young people, and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs, including safeguarding, first aid, behaviour management and recording with care. Staff are also keen to develop their skills in meeting young people's needs by working alongside other professionals, such as specialist health workers, teachers and therapists.

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 steps are taken to address the issues. For example, shortfalls in the home's records identified at the last inspection have been successfully dealt with. The quality of recording is consistently good and provides a detailed picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities.

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
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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 that the sanctions records include a detailed evaluation of the effectiveness and any consequences of each sanction used. (NMS 22.10)