

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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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 is a large Victorian detached property in a village. The home provides for children and young people from the ages of 10 years to 17 years, with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Accommodation is provided over three floors, the ground floor includes a kitchen, two lounges and a dining room. Young people have their own rooms which are located on the upper floors. The home is close to local shops, transport links and community resources.

Young people and staff participated in this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full inspection that was conducted unannounced. All key standards were assessed to help form a judgement on the provision of care.

Young people live in a warm and safe environment that enables them to have good outcomes in many areas of their lives. The home has created an atmosphere where young people and staff work together to make sure they are safe, solve problems, lead healthy lifestyles, enjoy learning and achieve, and are well prepared for adult life. Young people are viewed positively by staff and seen as individuals with different needs, tastes and interests. Their specific needs are clearly identified in written plans that comprehensively outline how their needs will be met on a daily basis.

Placements are usually planned to ensure that the home is the right place for individual young people and is able to help them with their needs.

There are just a couple of minor shortfalls for improving. These relate to record keeping in relation to medication, Ofsted's address is required to be added to the young person's guide and staff training is ongoing, which is mentioned in the section below.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the organisation were asked to ensure that a minimum of 80% of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. This remains as work in progress and is raised as a recommendation at this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff understand the importance of good nutrition, what constitutes a balanced diet and include young people in the planning of menus. Young people confirm that their food preferences are actively sought by staff. As a result they enjoy a varied and well balanced menu, which includes a selection of homemade meals such as meatballs and spaghetti and there is access to fresh fruit. Young people state they particularly enjoyed their recent Caribbean three course meal, homemade by young people with staff support. Information about young people's dietary requirements are recorded appropriately, which effectively promotes their health and well-being.

Staff arrange medical appointments for young people with the doctor, dentist or other medical specialists as required. Staff encourage young people to lead healthier lifestyles, they invite them to take part in activities, such as dance and football. Young people are provided with good advice, support and guidance on a range of health issues, for example, sexual health, smoking and alcohol.

Health care plans clearly identify the health care needs of young people. Risk assessments are in place and are created from information within health care plans. Staff discuss health issues with young people during key worker sessions and make links with other agencies, such as the children and adolescent mental health team to support individuals. This has a positive impact upon young people's health and well-being. Health care plans are reviewed on a regular basis to ensure they continue to meet the needs of young people.

The home has procedures in place to ensure the safe administration of medication at the home, with medication stored in a secure cabinet. However, minor errors are apparent within the medication records, though this has not had a detrimental affect on the young people placed. Staff are trained in first aid, which means they are able to respond quickly to any accidents or incidents within the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Each young person has free access to their own bedroom fitted with an appropriate privacy lock. Any sensitive or confidential information is held securely. Young people have no concerns regarding issues of privacy. This means privacy and confidentiality is respected.

Young people said they felt able to access the complaints procedure if necessary and it is also discussed regularly in young people's meetings. The information from this and key worker sessions is used effectively to improve the care given to each individual young person.

The safety and rights of young people and staff are protected. Any potential issues of a safeguarding nature are referred to appropriate external agencies for investigation. The home has its own safeguarding procedures which staff are familiar with. Safeguarding training, forms part of the ongoing core staff training programme. This means that all staff understand their responsibilities. Records of significant events that have occurred regarding the young people are consistently sent to Ofsted, in accordance with legislation. They detail the appropriate action taken to safeguard those young people concerned.

All young people spoken with feel that bullying within the home is not currently a problem. They confirm that they get on well with one another and that staff would act should a potential bullying situation occur. Information about bullying is included in written information given to young people as well as being available around the home. Such as, a 'something on your mind' book, along with a comments, compliments and complaints sealed box for young people to access freely, in the education room. This gives young people a number of ways to freely express their thoughts and opinions.

The home has systems in place to deal with unauthorised absences, which are underpinned by policy, procedure and staff guidance. The home has developed links with the local police and follows agreed local protocols regarding young people missing from care. Incidents are recorded appropriately.

Risk assessments are in place detailing individual needs and agreed strategies to support and protect young people. Restraints are not frequent occurrences and sanctions are fair and proportionate. Young people's views are encouraged on each occasion. Overall, detailed records evidence safe practice and good quality care for young people. The ethos of the home is to recognise good behaviour by reward rather than rely on sanctions.

All young people spoken with feel the home is a safe place to live and that they like spending time with staff.

General health and safety issues are addressed with a range of risk assessments covering general hazards in and away from the home. Service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment.

The systems for recruiting and clearing staff meet with regulatory requirement, with appropriate evidence being retained on site. This provides further safeguards for the young people placed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are well supported and receive individualised care in accordance with their assessed needs. The home encourages young people to reach their potential by ensuring they receive high quality support to develop new skills and to live as fulfilling a life as possible. Young people receive specialist support where necessary,

such as health professionals to ensure that they receive consistent and appropriate support and encouragement.

Young people's education and achievement are encouraged and supported. Where young people are at school, they are doing well. For other young people the home is actively liaising with the appropriate authorities. Young people's documentation provides details about their learning needs and how these are supported. The home's daily routines support young people's daily attendance within their educational placements. Staff provide practical and emotional support when young people experience difficulties going to school. This support always reflects young people's individual needs and issues they face. The home has good links with young people's schools, and works effectively with their teachers to support their education and deal with any problems that may arise.

Staff encourage young people to enjoy their spare time and to take part in leisure activities at home and in the community. Young people are offered a wide range of activities, such as dance and sports in order to build confidence in their own abilities and make friends with young people from different social and cultural backgrounds.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The planning material produced by the home is comprehensive, with evidence to show regular reviews and updating. The documentation identifies individual needs and contains plans and strategies to address those needs. Young people speak with insight about their own plans and confirm they have access to them as well as discussing and reviewing them regularly with staff. The plans cover all the required areas as laid out in the standards, which includes individual needs, religious and cultural issues.

Statutory reviews are taking place within the required timescale. Young people are able to describe their participation in the process with understanding and feel very well supported by staff at these times.

Contact agreements, arrangements and records form part of the planning documentation. All young people have suitable arrangements which includes both family and friends. Staff make sure that the arrangements for contact promote and safeguard young people's welfare, working closely with young people's families to ensure that contact is a really positive experience for young people.

Young people move into the home in a well-planned and sensitive way, sometimes with very short notice. Young people confirm they are provided with appropriate information on admission and that staff provide excellent support during the process. Staff gather 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. Staff are very good at helping young people settle in and feel at home. Staff make sure that young people know what is expected of them, what to do if they are worried and

give to support to ensuring young people can find their way around the local area.

The levels of consultation in the home are outstanding. As well as regular young people's meetings and key worker sessions, excellent levels of communication exist between staff and young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff actively 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 cooking, going to the shops, tidying their bedrooms, bringing their washing down, and managing money. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene, using public transport and finding out about local community facilities. This results in young people developing a range of life skills to support them in the future.

Young people have suitable personal allowances, including enough money for clothes. 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 to 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 have personalised the home; choosing the colour scheme for their bedrooms and accessories to reflect their individual tastes.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive equal opportunities to develop their own potential and interests. The service demonstrates that the individual care needs of young people are identified and that direct work with young people is good and is even outstanding in parts. Their care needs are routinely monitored through robust systems. This ensures that the individual care needs of young people are met.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose and this sets out the aims of the home and how it will operate. Young people also receive a children's guide to the home and this gives them useful information including advice about how to seek external support if necessary. However, information for young people regarding Ofsted's address is not included within this guide, though the telephone number for Ofsted is noted.

Staff are well supported. They say that when they need support the management team is available and helpful. Professional staff supervision takes place regularly within the timescale recommended in the standards. In addition, team meetings take place monthly to provide the whole staff team opportunity to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, staff development and training. Meetings also allow the staff team to look at ways to improve the service they offer.

The service has a staff team with a good range of skills and experience to look after young people. However, 80% of the staff team within the home have not yet achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or the equivalent. Though, there are further staff enrolled on this course. There are also systems in place, so that staff have their performance appraised by their line manager.

The staff team reflects the cultural backgrounds of the young people living in the home and provides both positive male and female role models for young people. The numbers of staff on duty meets the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

The home has systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The manager consistently monitors the running of the home every month. The management identifies areas for improvement and takes action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. A representative on behalf of the owner of the home also visits the home every month to monitor how well young people are being cared for.

The home's written records provide a clear picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are organised and contain up to date information about them. Young people are encouraged to read and make comments about what is written about them.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
1	ensure that the children's guide accurately describes what the home sets to do for the children and includes the address and telephone number of Ofsted. (Reg 4 (3))	31/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- maintain accurate records in relation to medicines prescribed as and when needed and given (NMS 13. 2)
- ensure that a minimum of 80% of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)