

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sue Winson
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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 children's home is a detached house in a residential area which is close to public transport links and community facilities. There are three bedrooms upstairs and one of these is used as a staff sleep-in room. Downstairs there is a lounge, kitchen, office/sleep-in room and a conservatory. It provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who are placed by their local authority.

Two young people were present and participated in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced key inspection considered all key standards in every outcome area. Individualised and personalised care, based on highly effective care planning, benefits the young people and ensures they have access to services to meet their assessed needs. A strong focus on safety and safe care protects them. This is a child focussed service where full and accurate recording and good communication ensures that all professionals involved with the young people are aware of significant events or concerns. Education and healthy living are well promoted and comprehensive independence plans ensure that young people learn skills for life. Young people have a voice and their views and opinions are listened to and respected. Diversity and equality are very well promoted in all aspects of the service. There are sufficient staff who are skilled, experienced and committed to achieving positive outcomes for the young people. The team is well managed and there is a highly robust quality assurance system. The manager and deputy demonstrate positive leadership and involve staff in the improvement agenda. One recommendation has been made in respect of the timeliness of gaining written consent for the administration of homely remedies and first aid. The manager and staff work continuously to improve their practice and outcomes for young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy a balanced and varied diet and are encouraged to be involved in budgeting, shopping and preparing meals. Their individual diets are well monitored

and they are encouraged to try different foods. Menus are compiled to reflect young people's cultural needs and choices. Young people say that they like cooking with staff who talk to them about health options. Meals are taken at table as social occasions. The service has a history of promoting healthy living with high degrees of success.

Comprehensive health care planning ensure that young people receive the services to meet their assessed needs. The staff are persistent in requesting information from placing social workers to inform these plans, which are regularly updated. Individual work takes place regularly to address emotional and physical well-being. Well established and positive relationships with the local looked after children's nurse benefit the young people, who engage in discussions with her about a range of health issues. They are registered with local doctors, dentists and opticians and older young people are encouraged and supported to make their own appointments. Young people are well informed about health services in the area which they can access directly. The company contracts with a therapy service to provide training and advice for staff, which includes consultation on direct working to promote positive self-identity and self-worth. The managers and staff value this input which benefits the young people.

The procedures and practices for the administration of medication largely safeguards the young people. Medication is safely stored, full records are maintained and staff are appropriately trained. There have been occasional delays in obtaining written permission for the administration of non-prescription medication. The home holds few homely remedies preferring that young people consult a doctor when possible.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled. They expressed satisfaction with the arrangements for them to make telephone calls or speak to staff or visitors in private. Room searches are only carried out for safety reasons and the young people are informed and invited to sign and comment on the records. Personal information is securely stored in the offices and staff sign confidentiality agreements.

Policies, procedures and practices for dealing with complaints, bullying, child protection and missing from home safeguard the young people. Staff receive training and regular updates. Young people know about the complaint procedures and staff regularly remind them of their rights during group and individual meetings. Information leaflets about children's rights organisations and stamped addressed envelopes to the manager, senior managers in the organisation and Ofsted are available to them. Neighbours have made positive comments about the young people and several professionals have complimented staff on the quality of care provided. Staff are vigilant to the potential for bullying and the small number of incidents have been appropriately addressed.

The welfare of young people is well promoted. They say they trust the staff who talk a lot about keeping safe. The home provides an atmosphere where young people can express their views or concerns and ensures that they have someone outside of the home who they can contact directly about any worries. Young people are further protected by a range of excellent individual risk assessments which provide specific strategies to minimise or eliminate risks. All significant events are notified to the relevant people in a timely manner. Young people absent without authority are protected as far as is possible and work with individuals has been effective in reducing the number of incidents. The home maintains good relationships with the local police to the benefit of the young people.

Positive behaviour management focuses on helping young people to take responsibility for their behaviour. They are able to earn extras through the effective reward system which identifies a small number of aims in consultation with the young people. Staff maintain a consistent approach, use praise and encouragement and support young people to achieve their goals. This results in very few sanctions and these are fair and reasonable. Physical interventions are used very rarely and as a last resort for safety reasons. Debriefing for staff and individual work with young people routinely follow any restraint. Full records of behaviour management measures are maintained and young people are invited to comment and sign them. Young people are positive about their relationships with staff.

The home provides physical safety and security. Appropriate safety checks are carried out within required timescales and urgent repairs are carried out quickly. Young people have the opportunity to practice evacuating the building during fire drills, which are routinely carried out shortly after any new staff or young people come into the house. The company has a history of highly robust recruitment procedures which protect young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is outstanding individual support for the young people, education is promoted and interests and leisure activities are encouraged and developed. Individual work is planned in line with comprehensive placement plans and sessions are well recorded so that all staff know what has been addressed and can build on this. Young people benefit from staff using innovative ways to engage them in addressing personal issues. The staff work in conjunction with a range of agencies and services to meet young people's needs.

The education of young people is actively promoted and they are supported and encouraged to attend and achieve. The service has a history of working with young people to find educational placements or employment in line with their wishes and abilities. Staff are knowledgeable about resources in the local area. The company has a school and good communication between the staff and education staff benefit the young people. Young people are able to pursue their interests and talents and are

encouraged to engage in leisure activities. In addition, staff arrange outings and trips for their enjoyment, sometimes in conjunction with the two small sister homes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are assessed effectively and comprehensively and written placement plans outline how they will be met. The staff are persistent in requesting full written information from placing authorities to inform these plans. They include clearly defined strategies which ensures consistency of care, and are updated at least monthly, and adapted as young people's needs change. Outcomes for young people are constantly monitored, as are the effectiveness of plans and strategies, through planning meetings and statutory reviews which young people attend. Effective partnership working with parents and professionals benefit the young people.

Young people are encouraged, supported and assisted to maintain constructive contact with their families and people who are significant to them. The home has a history of promoting contact and involving families in decision making where possible. Family members are encouraged to visit the home or telephone staff for updates.

Young people move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner whenever possible. When young people are admitted in an emergency, they are welcomed and staff ensure that their immediate needs are met and help them familiarise themselves with the area. Planning meetings are routinely held shortly after admissions. Examples were given where young people have been well prepared for moving on and have had the opportunity to visit new homes beforehand. Where young people move to independent living they benefit from staff support and understanding and are encouraged to ring or visit after they move.

Young people are integral to decision making in the home and are routinely consulted, both formally in meetings and individual sessions, and as part of everyday life. They are encouraged and empowered to give their views and opinions and do so readily. The majority of records have space for their comments and signatures and staff encourage them to contribute to their plans.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive care which helps prepare them and support them into adulthood. They benefit from an excellent independence programme which is tailored to individual abilities. A full assessment of their life skills is undertaken which highlights those they need to develop. Independence plans replace placement plans for 15 years olds and over, and these ensure that preparation for independent living is central to all aspects of their care. The plans are regularly reviewed and demonstrate that young people are making progress.

The house is suitable for purpose and provides sufficient space and adequate facilities to meet the needs of the young people resident. It is well decorated in a homely style and young people have their own bedrooms which they are encouraged to personalise. A rolling programme of refurbishment ensures that high standards are maintained.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are aware of and address young people's holistic needs taking into account their cultural, ethnic and religious practices and preferences. Placement plans are explicit about how individual needs are to be met by the service. The diverse staff team reflects society and the service works within an anti-discriminatory framework and practice is guided by equality and diversity policies and training. Tolerance and respect are actively promoted.

The Statement of Purpose provides clear information about the services provided and how the home operates. In addition, young people have their own guide which contains information they need in an appropriate format. Young people know about the guide and recall staff going through it with them on admission.

Young people are well supported by experienced and skilled staff who are committed to achieving positive outcomes and improving practice. Under the positive leadership and guidance of the managers they have developed into an effective and efficient team who communicate well and provide consistency of care. Comprehensive handovers between shift, shift planning and reflective practice is routine. Regular team meetings allow for discussion of young people and practice. Young people benefit from a stable staff team and only bank staff known to the young people cover shifts. Rotas demonstrate that there are sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of the young people. Staff have excellent training opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge and receive regular supervision and appraisal which addresses their professional development.

The manager and deputy, who have responsibility for three small homes in the area, provide effective leadership and thorough monitoring of practice. They have successfully raised the standards in the home and the staff are positive about their open management style and practices. The deputy has recently left the service and recruitment has begun. In the interim team leaders are taking on extra responsibilities to ensure thorough monitoring continues. Visits under Regulation 33 take place each month and comprehensive reports, which include action planning, are useful in guiding improvements. The manager and deputy consistently act on any concerns or deficits raised in the reports in a timely manner. The home has a development plan to guide their improvement agenda. Young people's files are well ordered, up to date and reflect their progress well.

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 written permission is obtained from a person with parental responsibility for each young person for the administration of first aid and non-prescription medication. (NMS 13.4)