

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Jackie Callaghan
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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 local authority children's home that provides emergency short-term residential accommodation for a maximum of five young people of either gender, who are aged between 12 and 17. The purpose of the home is to provide a safe and secure environment that promotes the welfare of young people.

The home is a purpose designed home located in a quiet residential area five minutes walk from the town centre and a mainline railway station. It is well served by public transport links and situated close to the motorway and other major road networks.

Placements are for a maximum of 12 weeks duration, other than in exceptional circumstances, during which plans to return home or another placement will be made and initiated. Two young people are currently living at the home and both contributed directly to this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced full inspection monitors the key national minimum standards. It focused on areas related to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection also concentrated on how the home consulted with young people, planned for their care and how the staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the service.

Outcomes for young people are good overall although there are many outstanding features that crossover a number of standards. This inspection found that young people are receiving first-rate quality care and support that fully meets their needs. There are positive relationships established between young people and staff resulting from the highly effective communication which ensures meaningful engagement is secured.

Three recommendations have been set as a result of this inspection to help further improve practice. Staff state that they are well supported by the management team who have a strong commitment and focus on improvement. Although, the home is not meeting supervision timescales as required by national minimum standards. The recording systems are not comprehensively detailing all the information to firmly evidence the support and guidance that is being offered to young people and, the home does not have a fully operational development plan. The accomplished relationships between staff and young people, however, are a key strength of the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. There were no actions or recommendations set at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home provides varied, nutritious and healthy home-cooked meals based on known likes, dislikes and personal needs. Young people say 'the meals are nice and I'm encouraged to be healthy'. Meals from different cultures are provided and the home successfully celebrates difference through themed cultural nights. Young people are actively involved in preparing and cooking meals. This helps to develop their skills ready for when they live independently.

Young people receive excellent support in respect of their health and development. The home ensures young people have access to all health related services to meet their physical and emotional health needs. Close links have been effectively established with health professionals to ensure continuity of care is appropriately maintained.

The home has comprehensive systems in place for the management of medicines. Each young person has a detailed health plan that is utilised effectively by staff to promote their well-being. The home operates a well-developed and very effective medication policy and practice. Staff's competence to administer medication is continually assessed. This ensures that the excellent practice continues to meet the high standards in order to promote young people's well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is respected by the staff team. Detailed recording systems are in place when it has been necessary to carry out room searches of young people's bedrooms. Young people are always present when this happens and they sign the homes documentation and add comments if they wish. Young people say 'staff really respect my space'.

Effective systems are in place to respond to safeguarding concerns and young people are aware of how to complain if they are unhappy about any aspect of their care. Young people confirm this as they comment. 'I can talk to anyone here if I have a problem. Staff listen to what I have to say and value what I have to say'. Young people went on to voice that bullying is not an issue in the home saying 'I feel safe living here'. Their safety is further promoted when their whereabouts are unknown as staff follow the agreed reporting procedures for these circumstances. This results in practices that are consistent with wider police protocols for reporting young people

who leave the home without permission.

Staff are very comfortable with their role of setting clearly understood boundaries while maintaining a high quality relationship between themselves and the young people. As a result, young people are encouraged and supported to behave in ways that will sustain them in the community. Young people say 'staff do put in boundaries but that's good, I know where I stand'.

The home has comprehensive risk assessments for all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire, young people's behaviour and activities. Safe procedures are in place to protect young people with tests on the fire systems and other electrical equipment taking place at the appropriate intervals. This ensures that young people can exit swiftly and calmly in the unlikely event of a fire.

The home operates a robust staff vetting procedure and staff demonstrate proactive awareness of the need to safeguard young people. Young people are involved in this process as the home is ascertaining and/or observing if young people are happy with the selection of staff in advance of appointment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive a good level of individual support that meets their specific and diverse needs. Each young person has an identified key worker, but all staff take equal responsibility for caring for them. Staff, however, are failing to comprehensively exploit the formal written support and guidance systems. For instance, key working sessions. The written records of these meetings detail a lot of unnecessary information and staff are not always documenting the crucial points of these discussions. An example of this is when a key work session took place with a young person following their return from being reported as missing. The written information did not stipulate if staff asked what could be done differently in order to discourage the young person from leaving, or, what it was that made them leave.

Staff have strong links with services outside the home to ensure that additional resources can be made available for young people when a need is identified. Staff are very positive about the value of education and work hard to make sure that every young person has an educational placement that meets their needs. Daily attendance at school is an expected part of the life of the home and staff work hard to help young people achieve this. All young people's achievements are recognised and celebrated, which encourages young people to persevere with their education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's placements are supported by excellent plans. Plans show that staff have a thorough awareness of the differing needs of the young people and how

these needs are to be met. Young people have appropriate opportunities to add to their own plans and confirmed that, 'I read and sign all my documentation and I know what is written about me'.

Young people have regular reviews and these are recorded. Staff and young people have appropriate input into the review process through the completion of reports and attendance. Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner and all say they have a basic awareness of what is planned for the future. However, both young people identified that they would like to live at the home permanently, but sadly, are aware that they cannot. This further shows that the care and support they receive during the time they reside at the home is outstanding.

In accordance with their care plans all young people are encouraged to maintain contact with members of their families. Staff clearly understand how important communication and contact with their family is for the young people and fully support their contact arrangements.

Young people say they are successfully encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives. Young people's comments include, 'any meetings that involve me I am invited to'. Young people are actively encouraged to communicate their views in regular discussions with their key workers, during group meetings and on an informal basis every day. Staff visibly show that they value the views and opinions of young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are learning both social and practical skills. This includes how to handle money and how to act in safe, healthy and hygienic ways. They are learning how to relate socially to others around them in order to cooperate with their peers and staff. This not only equips them with the skills needed to help them as an adult, but inspires them to respect and value their own needs and the differing needs of others.

Young people enjoy staying in an accessible and pleasant environment that is welcoming and safe. The home is well-maintained with good quality décor and furnishings. Resources and space are used effectively to maximise young people's independence and provides them with a secure environment.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The management of the home significantly contributes to the care and support young people receive. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service that are consistent with the Statement of Purpose. Young people are

well-informed about what the home provides through a young person friendly guide.

Young people flourish as they are cared for by an exceptionally well organised, committed management and staff group who are dedicated to providing care of the highest quality. The Registered Manager and senior staff are experienced and qualified and the staff team is well trained. The vast majority of staff are qualified to an appropriate level. The home also has two qualified pedagogues and the staff team have received social pedagogy training. This is having a positive effect and the home has an atmosphere of purposeful and imaginative direction.

There is a development plan written but this is in its infancy as it is not home specific and timescales are yet to be clearly defined. Neither does it stipulate that the current Registered Manager has just returned from his social work placement and that he leaves again for his next external placement in January 2010.

There are minor shortfalls in meeting required timescales for the supervision of staff. New staff should receive fortnightly supervisions for the first six months of their employment but this is not happening consistently. This has the potential to compromise the current good support processes. Staff, however, speak positively about the support they do receive. They say, 'we are really well supported and enabled to do our work' and 'staff work really well together, what is really nice is that there is no hierarchy. We are all here to do the same job which is to care for young people'.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff demonstrate a very strong commitment to ensuring that every young person has care that is individually tailored to meet their specific needs and that all young people feel valued and part of their community. Young people are successfully encouraged to learn about other cultures and communities and to respect each other and staff.

Documentation relating to young people is detailed and recording is of a good standard. Files provide a secure record of young people's needs, development, progress and history. Information in young people's files is cross referenced with other records kept in the home. This means that every young person has a clear history of their time in care and in this placement, to which they can have access. Systems for monitoring the operation of the home are robust.

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):

- develop the written individualised support processes in order to demonstrate the guidance and support young people receive. This specifically applies to key

worker sessions (NMS 7.1)

- ensure that all staff receive at least one and half hours of one-to-one supervision each month, with new staff receiving supervision at least fortnightly during the first 6 months (NMS 28.1)
- create a written development plan that identifies any planned changes in the operation or resources of the home, or confirms the continuation of the home's current operation and resourcing (NMS 33.6)