

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 children's home cares for up to three children from six years to 17 years old with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a semi detached house with four bedrooms near the centre of the town. The location of the house enables young people to access a range of community facilities easily. It is close to local shops, public transport and other community facilities.

There is currently only one young person living in the home visit and they participated 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 an good service in most respects with some outstanding features in enjoying and achieving. Young people live in a stable and secure home environment that helps them to feel safe and supported. Young people are making excellent progress in many areas of their lives and in particular with their education and the skills they need for adult life.

Young people are looked after by very competent people with suitable skills, knowledge and experience to work with vulnerable people. They show a strong commitment to ensuring that young people are protected from harm and are supported to address any problems they may face. The home works well with other agencies in safeguarding young people. Since the last inspection staff have become more confident with their skills, which is reflected in the recording of young people's progress and experiences. They benefit from very good training opportunities and strong leadership from the manager.

The home only has three minor shortfalls relating to the statement of purpose, children's guide and the induction of new staff. None of these issues have a direct impact on the welfare of young people living in the home.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection found that staff were not fully aware of the current legislation and government guidance about the measures they are able to use to prevent young people leaving without permission. Staff have now read the guidance and are able to demonstrate that they are clear about young people's rights regarding the restriction of liberty and the times when the door may be locked.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals from different cultures that meet their dietary needs. Staff understand what makes a healthy and balanced diet and encourage young people

to develop healthy eating habits. Young people said 'they give us an option of healthy menus'. Their food choices are taken into account and they confirm that they are encouraged every week to plan and choose what they have to eat, go shopping for food and cook meals.

Young people's health needs are actively promoted. They are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. They have detailed plans showing their assessed health needs and how their needs are being met.

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.

The home has good links with specialist health and advisory services to make sure that young people get suitable support with specific health issues. They provide young people with a lot of support and reassurance when they are nervous about attending appointments, such as the dentist to make sure young people get the treatment they need.

Staff deal with health issues sensitively and encourage young people to take responsibility for their own health based on age and level of understanding. Staff promote healthy lifestyles by ensuring young people get appropriate support and advice with a wide range of health and social issues including smoking, alcohol, sexual health and relationships.

Young people's health needs are protected by thorough medication policies and procedures that are put into practice effectively. Staff with first aid qualifications are on duty at all times to make sure appropriate action is taken to safeguard young people in the case of an emergency.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home's procedures and practices promote young people's privacy. They have single bedrooms and the accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily spend time to be alone when they wish. Young people make and receive telephone calls in private. Staff respect young people's privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. Confidential information is held securely in the office.

The home has a suitable complaints policy and procedures. Young people have information about the complaint procedure and know how to complain. They feel able to speak to staff about problems saying they can 'talk to everyone if unhappy'. They are confident that their complaints are taken seriously and promptly and fairly addressed.

Young people confirm that bullying does not happen in the home. Young people who have had difficulties with bullying in the past said that staff had given them good advice and sorted the problem out. Staff place a strong emphasis on countering bullying and are clearly aware of the potential risks. The home has a clear plan for preventing bullying, which is effectively put into practice. Young people are clearly aware that bullying is unacceptable and are supported if they experience any difficulties.

Staff provide young people good advice about personal safety. Young people feel safe and think that staff helps them 'to learn to keep safe'. The home has clear and detailed procedures for responding to concerns about young people's safety. Staff implement the procedures and work effectively with the relevant agencies to take appropriate and decisive action to safeguard

young people. Staff fully understand about their roles and responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. They are familiar with the home's safeguarding policies and are suitably trained in child protection.

Staff work effectively with young people to reduce the number of occasions when young people go missing. Young people have comprehensive individual risk assessments and plans that describe what action is taken should young people go missing: including the steps taken by staff to find them, such as looking for them and contacting them by mobile telephone; the timescales for notifying parents, the police and placing authority. The impact of issues of equality and diversity, such as culture, level of understanding and gender, are taken into account in the risk assessments and plans. The home has strong links with the Police and other agencies when young people go missing. Where the issue is a serious problem the home ensures that young people's placement is reviewed by the placing authority to assess if it continues to meet young people's needs and keep them safe.

Young people's behaviour is supported by well organised and consistent behaviour management strategies. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and feel that the rules are fair. Staff use praise and rewards to encourage positive behaviour and view young people in a positive light. They have established positive relationships with young people based on trust, respect and excellent communication that helps young people develop a good sense of socially acceptable behaviour. This approach is highly effective and results in improvement in young people's behaviour, for example, a significant reduction in verbal abuse. The home does not use physical intervention with young people and sanctions are usually kept to a minimum to deal with more serious behaviour, such as going missing. Staff receive good training about behaviour management, which is up dated every year.

Young people live in a safe environment. The home addresses health and safety issues with a range of risk assessments. They identify hazards in and around the home as well as risks faced by individual young people including activities and challenging behaviour, and clearly show how risks are managed safely. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks including the fire safety systems, to make sure that the home is a safe place to live.

Young people are protected by thorough procedures for vetting staff and visitors. The recruitment of the right individual for the job is much more important than filling the vacancy. The organisation's recruitment and selection procedures promotes equality of opportunity. Young people are involved well in the selection of staff. For example, by taking part in the interview. Their views and comments about candidates are taken into account when deciding whether to employ the person.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's individual needs are clearly identified in comprehensive placement plans. They receive personalised support tailored to meet their individual circumstances and needs. Staff put young people's plans into practice on a daily basis to an exemplary standard. Staff meet fully a wide range of young people's assessed needs, including sexual health and relationships, healthy lifestyles, emotional well-being, education, future plans and needs, identity, culture and gender. Staff are comfortable with discussing sensitive and challenging issues with young people and provide young people with plenty of opportunities to discuss individually any problems they are facing.

Also, the home has strong links with helping agencies, such as Barnardos and endeavour to ensure young people get the specialist support they require to address their specific needs.

Young people's education is actively promoted and supported by staff putting into practice a well developed education policy. Young people's placement plans gives extensive details about their education needs and aspirations are supported. Staff proactively support young people's daily attendance at school and have excellent relationships with schools and Connexions to ensure young people's needs are met.

Young people's school reports show that they are making excellent progress. They are currently sitting their GCSEs and have been accepted on a college course starting in the autumn term. Young people's preferences are taken into account, and they have opportunities to study and get work experience in areas that interest them.

Young people enjoy spending time socialising with their friends. Also, staff actively encourage young people to take part in leisure activities at home and in the community. They encourage and support young people's individual interests, such as music. Young people confirm that they enjoy these activities and are involved fully in planning activities and outings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's records provide a good insight into the individual needs of young people and plans in place to meet them. Young people have very detailed written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. Staff put the plans into practice and keep detailed records about young people's progress and experiences. Young people's placement plans are reviewed regularly to make sure that they are up to date and continue to meet their needs. Young people attend review meetings and feel that they are listened to and their views about their lives taken into account.

Young people have clear arrangements for contact with their families and friends to help them maintain relationships. Staff actively 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 to the home in a sensitive way. The home is good at working with the placing authority to ensure young people are appropriately placed. Where young people are experiencing difficulties the home initiates a review of the placement to consider if the placement continues to meet young people's needs and whether an alternative placement better meets young people's welfare. When young people move on staff try to encourage them to be fully involved and make positive choices about where they live.

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, what they do in their spare time, and how the home is decorated. The provider and staff actively seek young people's views about how well they feel they are looked after. Young people have the opportunity to meet regularly with staff as a group to discuss the running of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff prepare young people for adult life well. Young people are encouraged to take more responsibility for themselves suitable to their age and understanding. They routinely learn skills through taking part in the running of the home, such as shopping, planning meals, cooking, using money and household tasks. Young people said 'staff help us cook meals and budget money'. Also, they are encouraged to develop their personal care, organisational and social skills.

Young people are routinely involved in planning and spending their allowances for clothing and toiletries. They always choose their personal requisites and toiletries. They express their individuality in how they dress. Staff provide young people with good advice about managing money effectively and getting value for money. Young people have their own bank accounts and staff encourage them to save regularly.

Young people live in homely and comfortable accommodation, which is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. Young people have personalised their bedrooms and have enough personal space to meet their needs. They always take part in making decisions about the decoration, furnishings and colour schemes of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home is well managed and organised to meet the needs of young people. The manager demonstrates effective leadership. The staff show a strong commitment to working with individual young people to actively promote and safeguard their welfare.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is good. Evidence supports a consistent 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 consistently met. The home values the rights of individuals to respect and dignity and created an environment where people's differences are accepted.

The home's statement of purpose contains all the required information in full and clearly sets out what care and support will be provided and how this will be put into practice. However, the statement has not been revised to take into account changes in the staff team. Also, unfortunately a copy of the children's guide was not available for inspection.

Young people are looked after by competent people with the skills and experience to match the needs of young people living at the home successfully. Staff work with vulnerable young people in a calm and professional manner. The number of staff on duty meets the needs of young people. The staff team is generally well settled providing structure and a continuity of care for young people. The staff team is made up of a mixture of male and female staff, and reflects the cultural backgrounds of young people.

Staff are extremely positive about the level of support and guidance they receive. Professional staff supervision takes place regularly within the timescale recommended in the standards.

Also, team meetings take place regularly every month to provide the whole staff team to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, policies and guidance staff development and training, and look at ways to improve the service they offer.

Staff have opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge through relevant courses from a comprehensive training plan. Staff confirm that they have benefited from training and completing qualifications and feel much more knowledgeable as a result. This is reflected in their work and confidence in their abilities. For example, the quality of recording and report writing, in particular of risk assessments, has improved significantly.

However, the induction programme for new staff does not take into account the induction standards set out by the Children's Workforce Development Council.

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. This involves finding out what young people think about how they are being looked after. 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 detailed and clear picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Young people's records are well organised and contain up to date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. Young people 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 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	revise the statement of purpose to take into account recent changes in the staff team and notify Ofsted of the revision within 28 days (Regulation 5.a & b)	28 June 2009
1	supply a copy of the children's guide to Ofsted (Regulation 4.5)	28 June 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the induction training programme for new staff takes into account the Children's Workforce Development Council's induction standards (NMS 31.2).