

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

The children's home provides care and accommodation for three boys or girls, aged from 12 years old to 17 years old with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a semi-detached house in a residential area, near the centre of the town. The location of the house enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is also close to schools, shops, parks, libraries, swimming pools and public transport.

There are three young people living in the home and one of them took part in the inspection.

Summary

This visit was an interim inspection and was unannounced. The inspection focused on the national minimum standards relating to young people's health, safeguarding and the management of the home. Also, it looked at the progress the home has made with the recommendation made at the last inspection about the standard of the accommodation.

The home continues to provide an outstanding standard of care. Young people enjoy living in the home and feel extremely safe and very well supported. They live in a secure and stable environment that enables them to make significant progress in all aspects of their lives. There is strong evidence of positive outcomes for young people in developing healthy lifestyles, the preparation for adult life and managing challenging behaviour.

The home is effectively run and there is a strong commitment to provide an excellent standard of child care. Young people are looked after by a group of highly competent people with a strong range of skills and experiences suitable to caring for vulnerable young people. Staff demonstrate the ability to work well with other professionals and families to promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

Unfortunately, some of the home's excellent practice is not fully evidenced in the records. Young people's individual files do not always provide a comprehensive and up to date picture of their experiences, development and the range of support and advice they receive.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection the decoration and furnishing of the accommodation has improved and now provides an excellent home environment for young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They confirm that they routinely plan meals, go with staff to buy food and cook their own meals. Their food choices are always taken into account, but staff actively encourage young people to make healthy choices. For example, they encourage young people to have healthier breakfasts, instead of fried food, such as bacon sandwiches. This shows that staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They give young people excellent advice

and guidance about what is a balanced diet and the importance of eating plenty of fruit and vegetables for a healthy body and to prevent health problems in the future.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being is actively promoted. They have easy access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. They have individual health plans, which clearly show how their general and specific health needs are met. However, not all the plans are not up to date and take into account any changes in young people's health. For example, one health plan does not show the support a young person requires with their injuries following a recent accident. Nevertheless, staff are very knowledgeable about the assistance this young person needs and as a result their welfare is not directly effected.

Staff closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, by encouraging them to attend routine health checks, such as going to the dentist, and by ensuring they get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are unwell. Staff are also very good at identifying when young people are feeling unhappy and ensure that they get support to promote their emotional well-being.

Staff always encourage young people to take an active interest in looking after their own health and leading healthy lives. They encourage young people to take responsibility for their own health needs appropriate to their age and understanding. In this way the home places 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. This includes guidance from a range of specialist health and advisory services ensuring young people get suitable support with individual health issues. As a result young people get excellent information and advice to enable them to make informed choices about their health.

Young people's health needs are met and protected by highly effective medication policies that are put into practice extremely well. Medication is safely and securely stored. Staff keep up-to-date and accurate records of the medication in the home. The records are signed by two members of staff to reduce any risk of errors. Staff are very knowledgeable about the medication procedures and have an excellent understanding of the medicines being administered to individual young people. Staff are suitably trained in first aid to make sure appropriate action is taken to safeguard young people in the case of an emergency. The home habitually and frequently checks that the medication policies and practices are being applied safely.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff respect young people's privacy and confidentiality consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. Young people have single bedrooms and the bathroom arrangements promote privacy and dignity. The 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.

Young people know how to complain and are clear that their concerns will be taken seriously, and promptly and fairly addressed. They have access to information about the complaints procedure and staff encourage young people to let them know when they have concerns or if they are unhappy.

Young people feel safe. The home gives protecting young people from harm a high priority. Staff understand fully their roles and responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. They are knowledgeable about the procedures for keeping young people safe and put them in practice effectively. This involves, for example, providing young people with excellent advice about personal and road safety.

Young people confirm that bullying is not a problem in the home because they all get on well. They are clearly aware that bullying is unacceptable and they are supported if they experience any difficulties. Staff provide a suitable level of supervision at all times and encourage young people to tell them about problems. Staff work effectively with young people to promote tolerance by encouraging young people to accept and value other people's differences. Staff encourage young people to think about how their behaviour affects others. For example, staff have challenged successfully young people's use of racist and sexist language. In this way staff help young people to develop their clear expectations of how they should be treated. Also, they enable young people to develop the skills to work together, to solve problems and disagreements amicably.

Staff are extremely effective at encouraging young people to come in on time. The home has detailed individual risk assessments and plans for what they should do if young people are missing. The plans are put into practice consistently well to ensure young people are located and protected.

Staff encourage 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 talking to them, trying to understand their behaviour and building positive relationships with them. Staff show a good understanding of the issues that may influence young people's behaviour, such as low self-esteem, and take steps to help young people feel positive about themselves. This approach is extremely effective in helping young people deal with their worries and any disappointments constructively. It has led to significant improvements in young people's behaviour.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure. The home's thorough quality assurance systems ensure that the checks are carried out consistently and any problems are immediately addressed. Also, the home has strong systems in place for vetting and supervising visitors to ensure young people are safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy very homely and comfortable accommodation. They are very proud of and very pleased with the quality of the accommodation. They confirmed that they are always

involved in making decisions about the décor and furnishing of the house, such as choosing the pictures throughout the house. The home is very clean, decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard. Young people have personalised their bedrooms and have enough personal space to meet their needs.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home is very well run and the quality of care is consistently outstanding. Young people are looked after by a very competent staff team who have a wide range of suitable skills and experience. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home well. The staff team reflects 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 in the best possible way. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

Staff are very well-supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They know who they contact for support should the manager not be available. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful. In addition, supervision and team meetings take place regularly to allow the staff team to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, staff development and training and to look at ways to improve the service they offer. Staff have good access to suitable training. The training programme comprehensively covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

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. Also, 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 has very good systems to review the quality of care provided. The provider and manager consistently monitor the running of the home every month. This includes finding out and taking into account the views of young people and their parents about the home. The manager, as a result, identifies areas for improvement and steps are always taken to address the issues.

Young people's records are generally well-organised and contain the relevant information about them, including documents from placing authorities, that enables staff to look after them well. Although the files provide a clear insight to young people's individual needs and how they are being looked after, the records are not always thoroughly written or kept up to date. For example, the activity records do not show how young people spend their time, only that they are at home or have gone out. Also, placement and health plans and risk assessments do not provide a comprehensive picture of young people's experiences, development and the support they are receiving. This means that some of the excellent progress young people are making and the good work of staff is not adequately evidenced in the records.

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 Childrens 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 young people's health plans are kept up to date to show their current health needs and the support they require (NMS 12)
- ensure that young people's records provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of their assessed needs, experiences, development, progress and the support they receive. (NMS 35)