

Inspection report for children's home

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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 currently living in the home and they took part 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 children's home is an outstanding service in all respects. 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 their education, training and employment, preparation for adult life and managing challenging behaviour. Young people's assessed needs are clearly identified and they receive high quality care tailored to the individual requirements.

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. The home has strong and well-established relationships with social care, health and education agencies. Staff demonstrate the ability to work with other professionals and families to promote and safeguard young people and effectively plan their care and support.

The home is only decorated and furnished to a satisfactory level and young people want improvements made to the accommodation.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager was asked to review the statement of purpose to ensure that it accurately reflected the running of the home. This has been carried out and now fully complies with the regulations. In addition, the manager was asked to make improvements to young people's written health and placement plans. These documents are now much more detailed and provide a comprehensive picture of the individual needs of young people and how they are being supported.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home actively promotes young people's physical and emotional health and encourages healthy lifestyles. Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They are encouraged to try new recipes and food from different cultures. Their food choices are always taken into account and they confirm that they routinely plan meals, buy food and cook meals. Staff actively encourage young people to make healthy choices. For example, they encourage young people to eat healthy snacks, such as fruit instead of crisps and biscuits. 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 have comprehensive written and accessible plans that clearly identifies their specific and general health needs and outlines how they are met. The plans take into account health needs arising from young people's cultural background, sexuality and gender. Young people are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. 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. This includes making sure that young people have access to specialist services, such as Children and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and physiotherapy, to get assessment and treatment with particular problems.

Young people are always encouraged to take an interest in looking after their health and to lead healthy lives.

Staff encourage young people to be fully involved in identifying their health needs and taking responsibility for their own health care suitable to their age and understanding. For example, staff encourage young people to develop their personal care skills, including excellent advice on shaving and personal hygiene. Also, young people are supported and encouraged to make informed choices about the support available to them, and to make their own appointments with health workers, such as GP and dentist.

Young people have easy access to a wealth of information about health and social issues. Staff actively encourage young people to develop healthy lifestyles. They provide young people with excellent guidance and advice on a wide range of issues, including diet, sexual health and relationships, smoking, drugs, and alcohol. The home has also established strong links with a variety of health and counselling services, such as CAMHS and Response, enabling young people to get the specialist support they need with specific problems.

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.

The home's policies and practices promote young people's privacy and confidentiality exceptionally well. They have single bedrooms with their own keys. Young people are assured of privacy when washing and with their personal hygiene. The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time to be alone when they wish. 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.

Young people know how to complain. They are confident about talking to staff if they are unhappy and that their concerns or problems are always addressed very well by staff. The complaints procedure is accessible to young people and is suitable for their needs, age and level of understanding. The home has received no complaints since the last inspection, but the records show that all complaints are fairly and promptly addressed, and the complainant receives a thorough response within the timescales set out in the procedure.

The home gives protecting young people from harm a high priority. Young people confirm that 'staff help me learn to keep safe'. Staff put comprehensive and thorough safeguarding policies and procedures into practice. For example, sharing their concerns about young people with safeguarding agencies and working effectively with them to address the problem. When the home has serious concerns about the safety of young people they request that the social worker and other agencies reviews the young person's placement to see if it continues to meet the young person's needs and it is the best place for them to live. Staff also have access to the local safeguarding procedures. Staff fully understand about their roles and responsibilities to promote and safeguard young people's welfare and receive regular training in child protection.

Young people know the home's policy about bullying and that it is not acceptable. They confirm that bullying rarely happens within the home and that staff act immediately to sort out any problems. Staff put a strong emphasis on helping young people to learn respect for each other and other people and value differences. They actively challenge racist and sexist language and help young people understand why this behaviour is not acceptable.

The home encourages young people not to go missing. Young people have individual risk assessments and plans outlining what to do if they go missing. The plans thoroughly describe what action is taken, who is to be notified and the timescales for reporting them missing. This includes effective working practices and communication with the Police. There are very few incidents of young people missing. On each occasion staff have followed the written plans, tried to find young people and keep in touch with them by mobile phone. Staff encourage young people to return and will pick them up to ensure they return safely. The risk assessments and plans are reviewed habitually after each episode to see how best to support young people in the future.

The home's comprehensive individual behaviour management plans and risk assessments actively encourages acceptable behaviour and ensures challenging behaviour is effectively addressed. Young people all know what standards of behaviour are expected and are involved in developing the standards. Staff see young people in a very positive light and are committed to helping them when they have problems with their behaviour. They build very positive relationships with young people through excellent communication skills. They use a variety of techniques to assist young people develop socially acceptable behaviour, including acting positive role models, discussions about why certain behaviour is not ok and problem solving, and providing young people with experiences of different social settings. They encourage young people to

talk to them about their anxieties and frustrations and together try to work how to manage these constructively. This approach is highly effective meaning that there are no physical interventions and sanctions are seldom used. It is also leading to positive outcomes for young people. A parent commented about the changes in their child's behaviour: 'I am very pleased what the team have done with my child, he is a very lovable child and very well mannered'.

Young people's health, welfare and safety is protected by comprehensive policies and risk assessments. All the necessary health and safety checks, including fire drills, maintain a safe environment. The recruitment and selection of people wishing to work at the home is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. All staff working at the home have had an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's individual needs are explicitly identified in comprehensive placement plans. Staff put the plans into practice by consistently providing excellent advice, guidance and support that meets young people's personal needs. Staff can meet a wide range of young people's potential needs, including gender, identity, healthy lifestyles, sexual health and relationships, life skills, and problem solving. The home has well established and effective links with a variety of helping agencies, such as CAMHS, Connexions and Response, ensuring that young people get the right support with their particular problems. Staff are extremely good at ensuring young people get the help they are entitled to from social workers and the placing authority. For example, ensuring that young people get support with their emotional health and in planning for their future care. Young people have detailed information about the full range of helping services available in the community they can use without referring to staff.

All the young people living in the home have officially left school. Their education, training and employment is actively supported, encouraged and promoted. Young people's plans clearly set out extensive details about their educational needs and aspirations are supported. Staff support and encourage young people to follow careers in areas that interest them and actively support their daily attendance. They give practical and emotional support to young people experiencing difficulties and still trying to find their way. For example, working with young people, colleges and Connexions to identify suitable courses and work placements.

The home views educational achievement positively and celebrates when young people do well. Young people are gaining a wide range of qualifications, doing well in work placements and have been successful in getting jobs and apprenticeships in areas that interest them. Staff also encourage young people to develop their skills and build confidence in their abilities. For example, young people interested in woodwork have designed and built the desk used in the office, as well as other pieces of furniture and a bird table. This has enabled young people to gain a sense of achievement as well as practise their skills.

Young people are actively encouraged to take part in leisure activities both inside the home and in the local community. Young people's individual interests are encouraged. Given the young people's ages they spend most of their time out with friends, but also enjoy sports, fitness training, and going out for meals with staff to restaurants.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home's records provide an excellent insight into the individual needs of young people and plans in place to meet them. Young people have 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 to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff actively ensure young people have suitable regular contact and that the arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare.

Young people leave the home in a sensitive and thoroughly planned way. The home plays a key role in identifying and planning new placements for young people. Staff contribute fully to the assessment of young people's needs to ensure that young people continue to get the support they require and the move is a positive experience for young people. This includes sharing information about young people's needs and progress, working openly and effectively with placing authorities. Young people are fully involved in preparing for leaving the home and finding where they will be moving to. Their views are sought and taken into account. Staff provide emotional and practical support for young people leaving the home.

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 the rules. The provider and staff actively seek young people's views about how well they feel they are looked after. This includes young people meeting regularly with staff as a group to discuss the running of the home.

The home has a friendly and supportive atmosphere. Young people enjoy excellent relationships with staff based on honesty and respect. Staff are extremely helpful and enjoy spending time with young people. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people consistent with good child care.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are exceptionally well prepared for adult life and moving on to more independent accommodation. They have well developed individual leaving care plans that identify their needs and the support to assist them develop the skills, knowledge and confidence they require. The plans explicitly address all their needs including personal care, education, accommodation and finances as well as needs arising from their cultural background, gender, faith and sexuality. At all times young people are fully involved in making decisions about what skills and support they need to help them develop life skills.

Young people routinely take part in the daily tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, laundry, cleaning, 'do it yourself', handling money and following a budget. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future. Also, staff encourage them to develop their personal care, organisational and social skills, including assistance in completing college and job applications.

Staff work effectively with young people and leaving care advisors to ensure that they feel confident about being more independent and that they have access to social and community support services when they leave.

Young people are encouraged to express their individuality in the way they dress. They are always involved in choosing how to spend their pocket money, and allowances for toiletries and clothing. Staff provide very good advice around value for money and saving. They also support young people in claiming the financial support they are entitled to, such as Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

Young people live in a homely and comfortable environment, which is maintained, decorated and furnished to only a satisfactory standard. Young people feel that the 'house needs to be decorated and painted'. The whole house has not been decorated or refurbished for some time. Young people like the accommodation and have personalised their rooms to reflect their interests and individual tastes.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home is well run and effectively managed. There is a strong commitment from the manager and staff to provide young people with a safe home environment where they can address their problems and achieve.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is outstanding. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to delivering equality and diversity in practice. The home provides care and accommodation for young people with a range of complex behavioural, emotional and social needs. 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. There is a strong commitment to challenging any unacceptable behaviour, such as racist and sexist language, helping young people understand the impact of this behaviour on others, and helping young people to be socially skilled and play an active part in the community.

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.

Staff are very well supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their role 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. Staff receive one to one supervision regularly within the timescale recommended in the standards. Also, team meetings take place regularly every month to allow the whole staff team to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, staff development and training, and look at ways to improve the service they offer.

Young people are looked after by a highly competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the

home exceptionally well. 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. Young people confirm that they always know who will be on duty and know all the staff 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 vast majority of the staff have achieved a recognised child care qualification. Staff have very 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. It is regularly reviewed to check if there are any additional training needs.

The home has very good systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The provider and manager consistently monitor the running of the home every month. They identify areas for improvement and take action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare. As part of their review they regularly seek the views of young people, their parents and relevant agencies about the standard of care provided.

The home's written records provide a 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 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 the interior of the home is maintained to a good standard of decorative repair and furnishing (NMS 24.3).