

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 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 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

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

At this unannounced full inspection all the key national minimum 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 outstanding children's home that meets all the standards and regulations exceptionally well. The children's home is very well managed and effectively run to promote and safeguard young people's welfare. Young people are protected from harm and are very positive about the quality of care they receive.

The home provides a safe and supportive environment where young people are able to develop their skills, competence and confidence. Young people are looked after by a group of enthusiastic, highly competent and well-trained staff with the right skills and experience to support vulnerable young people. Young people's welfare is enhanced by very good relationships with staff. Young people know that staff are always there if they need someone to talk to and to help them.

Staff are effectively supported by the manager and there is a strong focus on the needs of individual young people. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily, enjoy regular and varied activities, and find out about the world they live in. Young people are safeguarded by excellent practice in relation to ensuring that bullying is not an issue and by systems to monitor children who are missing from home.

However, one young person does not have a written consent for medical treatment; the records filled in when staff search young people's possessions do not show what, if anything, was found; and one of the young people's bedrooms is not as comfortable as it could be.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager was asked to ensure that young people's health plans were kept up to date. Also, that young people's records provide a detailed and comprehensive picture of their assessed needs, experiences, development, progress and the support they receive. Young people's records are now much more detailed and up to date.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's physical health and emotional well-being are actively promoted and they are fully supported to develop healthy lifestyles.

Young people enjoy healthy, homemade and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They especially enjoy spaghetti bolognese. Young people's food choices are always taken into account; for example staff support young people to follow vegetarian diets. Young people routinely plan meals, go to buy food and cook meals. Staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet and actively encourage young people to develop healthy eating habits and cooking skills. Staff are also very good at encouraging young people to try new food from different cultures. For example, encouraging young people to find out about how to make curry and the health benefits of different spices used in Asian cuisine.

Young people have easy access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. Detailed information about their health needs and how their general and specific health needs are met are included in their placement plans. This provides a clear picture about how young people's health needs are being met on a daily basis. Staff have an excellent understanding of the full range of young people's health needs. They closely monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, encouraging them to attend routine health checks, such as going to the dentist and optician. They also ensure young people get suitable medical advice and treatment in an emergency and when young people are feeling unwell.

Staff place a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles. Staff always encourage young people to take an active interest in looking after their own health and to lead healthy lives appropriate to their age and understanding. For example, helping young people to clean their teeth correctly and why this is important for their long-term health. As a result young people access information about a wide range of health and social issues, including sexual health, smoking, alcohol, drugs and emotional well-being. This excellent information and advice helps young people to make informed choices about their health options, including the choice of health workers and support they receive.

The home's procedures for managing medication are put into practice consistently

well to ensure young people's welfare is promoted and protected. Medication is securely stored. Staff make sure that young people only have medication specifically prescribed for them and take it in line with the prescription instructions. Staff keep detailed and accurate medication records, which are routinely checked to ensure young people get the medication they require safely. Staff are suitably trained in managing medication and first aid to enable them to fully support young people in an emergency. Young people only keep their own medication after staff have assessed them as sufficiently responsible to look after their medicine safely and follow the prescription instructions.

However, one young person did not have written consent from their parents, or a person with parental responsibility, for medical treatment. Staff were aware of this issue and demonstrated that they had requested written consent from the placing authority.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a safe and secure environment and are effectively protected from harm. Staff respect young people's privacy consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. For example, staff only search young people's belongings on clear grounds and where failure to carry out a search would put young people and others at risk. However, on the only occasion a search took place, staff did not document what, if anything, was found in the relevant record.

The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time to be alone when they wish. Staff clearly understand young people's rights to confidentiality, but know how to deal with information they are given in confidence in relation to safeguarding concerns. Information about young people is managed confidentially and held securely in the office.

Young people know how to complain and feel confident that staff take any worries they may have seriously and will try to sort things out. Young people have people, including advocates, they can also talk to if they are unhappy and help them express their views.

Young people are protected by staff that give young people's safety the highest priority. All staff are very well trained in safeguarding, including internet safety, and are knowledgeable about safeguarding policies and procedures. This means that they are able to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know exactly what they need to do to protect young people. Staff provide young people with excellent advice about personal safety and encourage young people to let them know when they have worries or if they are unhappy. When staff are concerned about young people's safety they take decisive action to protect young people and make sure that young people get the support they need. They work very effectively with safeguarding agencies to protect young people by sharing information appropriately and putting safeguarding plans into practice.

Staff make every effort to ensure that young people are free from bullying. Staff have created an atmosphere where young people know bullying is unacceptable and everyone is encouraged to get along well. For example, staff encourage young people to take turn, share interests and hobbies, and help young people to understand and accept other people's characters, views and cultures. Staff are vigilant and provide young people with a suitable level of supervision. As a result they are able to identify and anticipate any problems and act immediately to deal with the situation.

Staff are very aware of young people's vulnerability and the risks they face in the community. They work extremely hard to ensure that risks to young people are effectively managed. The home has detailed individual risk assessments and plans for what staff should do if young people go missing. The plans clearly set out what action is taken to protect young people, including ensuring young people know what time they need to come home and keeping in contact with young people by telephone. Staff always warmly welcome young people on their return and make sure young people are safe.

Staff are very good at building positive relationships with young people to enable them to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour and deal with any difficult behaviour constructively. Staff use effective communication skills to ensure young people know what standards of behaviour are expected, reasons why certain behaviour is not acceptable, and the possible consequences of any poor behaviour. Staff make sure that young people have the opportunities to experience, and understand what is expected, in different social settings, such as eating in restaurants, going to concerts and shopping.

Staff always view young people in a positive light and show a very good understanding of the issues that influence young people's behaviour, such as life experiences and family relationships. These insights enable staff to work well with young people and identify the best ways to help them. For example, staff have effectively challenged young people's use of racist comments by enabling young people to learn about and develop an appreciation of different cultures through food and music.

Staff keep accurate records of any sanctions used with young people. This provides clear information about the effectiveness of individual behaviour management strategies and helps staff ensure young people are getting the right support and guidance.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures, risk assessments and checks. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure.

The recruitment and selection of people working at the home is very thorough to make sure young people are protected. For example, before starting work all staff

have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks. The recruitment practices carefully ensure that staff have the skills and competencies to meet the needs of individual young people. Also there are suitable systems in place to ensure that visitors to the home are suitably checked and supervised to protect young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive exceptional individual support and guidance. Staff spend a lot of time individually with young people and clearly enjoy working with them. Staff are understanding and compassionate, develop trusting relationships with young people. As a result,,, young people feel comfortable talking to staff about problems and accepting help and advice.

Young people's individual needs are clearly identified in their records and the support they receive is tailored to meet their personal circumstances. Staff are very knowledgeable about young people's specific needs. They also know how best to work with each young person, taking into account their abilities and level of understanding. This ensures that young people get the right support and assistance. There are many excellent examples of staff providing advice and support to meet the wide range of young people's needs, including healthy lifestyles, personal safety, education and training, emotional well-being and life skills.

There is strong evidence that young people are making pleasing progress in education and learning. Staff see education as important and have created a stimulating environment that encourages young people to find out about the world and develop confidence in their abilities and skills. Young people are achieving, gaining qualifications, and being on college courses. Young people's school reports are very positive, praising young people for their progress, attendance and good behaviour.

Young people's educational needs are identified and the arrangements for meeting their needs are put into practice effectively. Young people's education plans reflect their personal needs and preferences to ensure they have every opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities in areas that interest them, such as hairdressing. The home's structured daily routine supports young people's participation in education. Staff have successfully helped young people settle in well at new schools. They work exceptionally well with schools and colleges to support young people's learning and development. For example, staff help young people with homework and always attend school meetings and events.

Young people enjoy their leisure time and take part in activities in the wider community. Staff actively support and encourage young people to take part in leisure activities and develop their talents and interests; for example fishing, collecting crystals, listening to music, going to the library and out for meals. Young people have the things they need to make the most of their hobbies, including fishing rods and equipment and display cases to keep crystals in.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's placement plans are used effectively, providing excellent insight into the individual needs of young people. All staff are fully conversant with the plans, as a result young people's needs are consistently met by knowledgeable, caring staff. For example, young people's interests, such as cookery, fishing and crystals, are actively supported and encouraged. It is evident that young people are the heart of the home and their welfare is of paramount priority to staff. Placement plans are reviewed on a regular basis; this exemplary practice means plans are up to date and continue to meet the individual needs of young people.

Young people's views are effectively represented at reviews of their placement plans by staff and independent advocates. For example, one young person wrote a letter, with the help of an advocate, informing the people at the review meeting that they 'feel settled and I am doing well'. Discussions with young people support this; they feel confident to talk to staff because they 'trust them' and do not want anything to change because it is 'perfect already'.

Effective contact arrangements ensure young people are in regular contact with their families, which means they are able to maintain and build positive relationships with them. Staff effectively support young people during contact visits to ensure the arrangements safeguard and protect their welfare.

Emergency placements are handled effectively to ensure young people are able to settle quickly, with staff actively seeking all the relevant information about young people to ensure they are meeting young people's needs. The home prepares young people for moving on by instigating purposeful pathway plans, which enable young people to learn basic life skills, such as budgeting and shopping. This significantly enhances young people's future life skills and opportunities. Clear arrangements are implemented to support young people who are moving on to ensure this is planned and handled sensitively. Staff work very well with other agencies during this process, which means young people continue to receive the support they need.

Young people are actively encouraged to express their views and be involved in decisions about the home and their lives. Hence, they are able to influence what happens to them and suggest improvements. For example, suggesting the type of vehicle the home may wish to purchase or where they would like to live when they leave. Young people's views are valued highly by staff, who provide clear explanations or alternative suggestions when their wishes cannot be met. This encourages young people to develop realistic expectations about themselves and the world around them.

Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff, who speak fondly of them. Young people are extremely confident speaking with staff, saying that they would talk to them if they had any concerns. Young people are equally keen to share their

successes with staff, such as merit cards and revel in the praise bestowed upon them. This mutually respectful relationship significantly enhances young people's self-esteem and helps them to feel valued.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Staff actively encourage young people to develop the skills they need for adult life suitable to their age and understanding. They routinely learn skills through taking part in the running of the home, and carrying out tasks such as cooking, going to the shops, tidying their bedrooms, bringing their washing down, and managing money. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene. This results in them developing a wide range of life skills to support them in the future.

Young people have suitable personal allowances, including enough money for clothes and toiletries. They choose how to spend their allowances with support and guidance from staff and in this way learn how to manage money effectively. Young people are able to express their individuality in how they dress taking into account the season, their age and level of understanding.

Young people live in generally a very comfortable and homely environment that meets their needs. The house is clean, decorated and furnished to a high standard. Young people have personalised the home, choosing how to decorate their bedrooms to reflect their individual tastes, for example, in the colours of their favourite football teams. However, one of the young people's bedrooms is not as homely as the rest of the house. Also, the lock on another young person's bedroom did not work properly making it difficult for staff to open the door in an emergency.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Young people live in a home where there is a strong commitment to excellent childcare practice. The home continues to be effectively managed and run in young people's best interests. The manager and staff maintain a warm and supportive environment where young people are valued. The home has good systems in place to review the quality of care provided. This includes listening to young people about how they are looked after. The provider and manager consistently monitor the running of the home every month and consistently look at ways to improve the quality of service they provide.

The promotion of equality and diversity 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 individuals' rights to respect and dignity and created an environment where people's differences are accepted. The home places a strong emphasis of encouraging young people to find out more about the world they live in and different cultures by experiencing different foods, music and playing an active part in the local 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. In addition, 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 and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They confirm that when they need support and guidance, the manager is always available and helpful and they receive one-to-one supervision regularly. In addition, team meetings take place every month to allow the whole staff team to discuss the running of the home and to look at ways to improve the service they offer, to reflect on young people's progress and how best to support them.

Young people are looked after by a highly competent staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. Staff have relevant qualifications for working with young people. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home very well. The numbers of staff on duty are sufficient to meet the needs of young people in the best possible way. This includes sufficient time for direct work with young people, and the support young people need for activities, visits and attending appointments. Staff have access to a comprehensive training programme that covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

The home's written records provide a thorough picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress. Staff make every effort to get all the relevant information about young people from social workers, parents and other people involved in young people's lives. This ensures that staff are fully aware about young people's needs and how best to support them.

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):

- obtain and retain on file prior written permission from a person with parental responsibility for each child, for the administration of first aid and appropriate

non-prescription medication (NMS 13.4)

- ensure that all searches of young people's possessions are documented showing the time and the date and the reason, noting what if anything was found, who carried out the search and who was present at the time. Such records should be signed by all those present (NMS 9.8)
- ensure that the home is decorated and furnished throughout to a standard that creates a pleasant domestic environment. In particular bedroom one is homely and comfortable, and the lock to bedroom three works correctly. (NMS 24.2)