

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Paul Scott / 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 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 to 17 years 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.

This visit was an interim inspection and was unannounced. The main focus of the inspection was on how well the home promotes and safeguards young people's welfare. It also looked at the progress the home has made with the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection.

This continues to be an outstanding service. Young people's privacy is respected. Complaints are well handled and young people know that staff are always there for them and will listen to their views. Staff are proactive in ensuring that the welfare of young people is promoted and protected and that young people are kept safe from harm. Behaviour management is very good. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness of the risks to the young people during their known and likely activities. Written risk assessments provide clear detail of the action required to minimise the identified risks and comprehensively promote young people's safety. Staff ensure that young people live in a safe environment and know what to do to keep themselves safe in an emergency, such as a fire.

The report contains three recommendations, which includes one carried over from the previous inspection.

It is recommended that the provider makes improvements to the records of searches of young people's possessions to include who carried out the search, who was present and what was found. This target remains unmet.

Individual case records do not clearly identify the actions to be taken in the event of a young person going missing, taking into account the individual needs of the young person. Electrical installation checks have been undertaken. However, the provider has not taken the necessary steps to address the shortfalls identified at the inspection. Therefore, young people may be put at unnecessary risk.

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager has made positive progress in addressing most of the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection.

The manager was asked to obtain consent for each young person for non-prescription medication and first aid signed by a person with parental responsibility. Each young person now has suitable written consent to prevent any delay in them getting help in a medical emergency. Also the manager was asked to improve the standard of decoration and security of young people's bedrooms. The house is a much more pleasant place to live because all bedrooms are now decorated to a good standard with colours chosen by the young people, and young people are able to lock their bedrooms.

However, the manager has not made satisfactory improvements to the records showing the outcome of searching young people's possessions. The records still do not provide a full picture of who carried out the search, who was there and what was found.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

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 demonstrate a very good understanding of how to promote privacy for the young people. This is done very sensitively and safely and is in line with good parenting; for example knocking on bedroom doors before entering. Young people confirm this. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms in the colours and themes of their choice. Details about young people's care are recorded and stored appropriately to maintain good levels of confidentiality. Young people have access to the house telephone. Some young people have mobile telephones for which they can earn credit for good behaviour. This ensures that young people's privacy is respected and the payment method is convenient. However, the recording of searches of young people's belongings does not meet the national minimum standards because it does not identify who carried out the search, who was present and what, if anything was found.

Young people know how to complain and staff handle their complaints well. They say staff listen to them and take their concerns seriously. Staff have explained the procedure to them and there is also information in the young people's guide about how to complain. All staff have access to written guidance on handling complaints to

ensure they know what to do if a person complains about the service. The complaints records contain the required details including how the complaint was investigated and the outcome.

The provider has very good safeguarding systems and procedures for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Therefore, the welfare of young people is well promoted and they are very well protected from abuse. Staff describe young people's safety as, 'an absolute priority'. Staff demonstrate very good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the young people's safety. The manager has established strong links with independent services to ensure that young people are kept safe. Relationships between young people and staff are very positive. Young people say 'this is the best place to live'.

Young people say they feel safe living in the home. Despite fall outs and arguments, they say that bullying is not an issue in the home because staff are around at all times and are quick to step in if an incident arises.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of positive behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour. Staff take an individualised approach to each young person's behaviour supported by clear behaviour management plans that are based on reward and praise. Relationships between young people and staff are extremely positive. Staff speak proudly about the achievements of the young people. Sanctions are relevant and reflect the age and understanding of the young people. The effectiveness of sanctions is regularly reviewed by the manager and the staff. This helps ensure that young people are getting the right support and guidance. Staff use effective management strategies that mean physical restraints are not used. This is a notable area of outstanding strength.

Reducing unnecessary risks to young people is a high priority at the home. Written risk assessments, linked to individual care plans, are recorded to enable staff to know what action to take to minimise the risk to each young person during their known and likely activities. These are reviewed regularly. Staff talk in a determined manner about their commitment to ensuring that the young people's welfare is safeguarded. They use local knowledge and contacts to support their efforts.

Staff encourage young people not to go missing. Clear policies and procedures mean that staff know what to do if a young person does go missing, including who should be notified and what needs to be done when the young person returns. However, young people's records do not include sufficient details of actions to be taken in the event of a young person going missing, taking into account the individual needs of the young person; for example how long before staff report the young person missing and what are the concerns. This means that young people may be placed at unnecessary risk should they go missing from care.

Young people's physical safety in the home is very well protected. General and individual risk assessments enable staff to put plans into place to manage and

minimise risk to young people. The fire safety check records are up to date. All staff and young people have been involved in regular fire safety drills. Fire, gas and electrical equipment are checked at the appropriate intervals. However, the recommendations made during the electrical installation checks have not been addressed.

Young people are protected from harm because staff working at the home are carefully checked to ensure they are suitable to work with vulnerable young people. Also, staff take suitable steps to check and monitor all visitors to the home.

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 not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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):

- 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 individual case records maintained for each child who is

accommodated include details of actions to be taken in the event of absence without authority, taking into consideration individual arrangements based on the needs of the child as agreed in his/her placement plan (NMS 19.2 & 19.3)

- take positive steps to keep young people safe from the risk from hazards; in particular ensure that the shortfalls in the electrical installation have been addressed and that the electrical installation has been re-inspected to ensure that it is working properly by a qualified technician. (NMS 26.1)