

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Russell Shackford
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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 is registered to provide care, accommodation and education for up to 26 boys and girls from eight years up to 17 years old. The home offers a specialised service to children and young people with autism.

The home has a range of accommodation. There are three flats with four bedrooms and two flats with six bedrooms. There are also two one-bedroom, independent flats for young people who can enjoy a more independent lifestyle.

Each flat has a lounge and spacious kitchen diner. Some bedrooms are en-suite.

The home benefits from a wide range of leisure and education facilities on site. These include a school, home cinema, bistro, games room, sports hall, gym, hydrotherapy pool, five-a-side football pitch, horticultural facilities, a craft room, sensory room, library and information technology suite.

There is also a playing field, gardens and parking area.

Summary

This was a full inspection to look at all key standards and related regulations under the Every Child Matters outcome groups for young people.

This is a good service with some outstanding features. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and their good health is very well promoted. Good child protection procedures and practice safeguards the welfare of the young people. Education and leisure needs are very well met, and the home works closely with parents and other services to meet the range of young people's needs. Care planning is good and placement plans are very well recorded and reviewed. Choice, communication and participation is good. Staff are sufficient in number and they are trained, experienced and competent. The home is well managed and there is satisfactory monitoring of the standard of care provided in the home. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There are good approaches to promoting equality and diversity detailed in all outcome areas. Examples highlighted include choice, communication, cultural preferences, diet, participation and personalised targets.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered person was asked to make improvements around the restriction of children's liberty, fire safety training and drills, risk assessments and the monitoring of the quality of care at the home. All of these matters have now been satisfactorily addressed and they are reported upon in the main body of the report.

It was recommended that improvements were made to medication and recruitment records. All of the required recruitment checks have been satisfactorily undertaken. Improvements have been made to recruitment procedures and all staff files have been internally audited to ensure that they contain the required information. They are now maintained to a good standard and

all of the required information is present. The medication records have been revised and improved to ensure that there is a record of the action taken when discrepancies are identified.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are given choices about their food. The use of pictures and each young person's preferred communication method ensure that, as far as possible, all young people are able to make food choices. The food served is both healthy and nutritious. Staff encourage young people to eat healthy foods and snacks. This is supported by the use of a breakfast and snack menu which has been produced by the staff team. The cooks at the home are trained in nutrition and special dietary matters. The staff have a good understanding of food hygiene and cultural issues relating to food. Staff and cooks work collaboratively to produce menus that reflect young peoples individuality. They demonstrate a good understanding of each young person's preferences which helps to ensure that they enjoy the food served. Individualised menu cards help to ensure that dietary, cultural and religious preferences are adhered to: This is particularly well managed. Young people are involved in shopping, baking and preparing meals. They have access to a well-equipped kitchen, where they can prepare drinks and snacks for themselves. Baking and snack making are often used as an entertaining way of supporting a healthy diet. Therefore, young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meets their dietary needs. They also have opportunities to plan, shop for and to prepare meals.

Health promotion is a high priority at the home. Healthcare records are up to date and accurate, enabling staff to respond to change and to inform health professionals and parents of the children's health progress. There is detailed written guidance for staff on a wide range of young people's health and medical matters, which ensures that they understand relevant health matters and their own responsibilities. Staff are supported by a health care coordinator who provides advice and guidance in matters such as diet, nutrition, weight, learning objectives and activities. The home has links with a wide variety of specialist health services and there is much evidence of these being used to meet individual young people's needs. Individual learning objectives, reflecting care plan targets around health are planned and evaluated on a regular basis. The staff plan, develop and deliver a variety of events that encourages individual interests, play and healthy activities. Examples highlighted include walking, swimming, dance and trampoline. Young people's involvement is supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based activity providers. Therefore, young people's health needs are identified and services are provided to meet them, and their good health is very well promoted.

Staff are trained in medication matters to enable them to safely store, administer and record the medication that they are responsible for. Medication is securely stored and records are up to date and accurate. There is a good monitoring system in place to identify any discrepancies and the action taken.

All staff have received training to enable them to provide first aid if necessary. Staff have also received specialist training to meet a range of individual young peoples health and medical needs. Therefore, young people's health needs are met and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate good understanding of facilitating privacy for the young people. Privacy is well respected in all aspects. This is done sensitively and safely. Staff confirm that they are able to speak and make telephone calls in private and details about young people's care are recorded and stored appropriately, to maintain appropriate levels of confidentiality. Young people have access to a private telephone. Visiting families and friends can have the use of a visitor's suite which can also be used for overnight stays.

All staff have received training on complaints to ensure that they know what to do if a person complains about the service. There is information in the young people's guide about how to complain. Staff enable young people to complain through support or advocacy. There is an independent advocacy service available to the young people. Staff say that an excellent service is provided by them and cite examples of how well the advocate interacts with the young people. The complaints procedure is supported by a clear and thorough recording system. Therefore, complaints are well handled.

The managers and staff have all received child protection training. The provider has a good safeguarding procedure for staff to follow in the event of any allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the safeguarding procedures to promote and protect the young people's safety. Therefore, the welfare of young people is promoted, they are protected from abuse, bullying and unauthorised absence and an appropriate response is made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse.

All significant events at the home have been notified to the relevant authorities including Ofsted.

The sanctions policy is good, promoting the use of praise, encouragement and de-escalation of behaviours. The policy reflects the age, understanding and individual needs of the young people concerned. Therefore, young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Physical restraint is occasionally used to manage behaviour where no other alternative exists. Staff are trained in the provider's policy and practices. Physical restraint records contain the required details. The provider has revised and changed its egress policies and procedures to ensure that children are kept safe whilst ensuring that their liberty is not restricted. Changes have been made to the door locking system to address the matter raised at previous inspections about the routine restriction of young people's liberty. This practice has now ceased.

Positive steps are taken to keep children safe. Written risk assessments 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. The risk assessments are regularly reviewed for implementation and effectiveness.

All staff and young people have been involved in regular fire drills. All staff working at the home have received up to date fire safety training to enable them to minimise the risks to young people in the event of a fire at the home. The fire safety check records are up to date

and accurate. Therefore, young people's physical safety from fire in the home is adequately protected.

All staff have been appropriately recruited and they have undergone suitable Criminal Records Bureau checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive very good personalised support appropriate to their needs. The records contain details of individual support services involved in the health, care and education of young people. The provider commissions services to fit the young people's needs. The staff appreciate that the individual young people have a range of needs arising from diversity. All staff have received training around equality and diversity. They demonstrate a good appreciation of the need to promote difference and they attempt to enable the young people to follow their example.

Education is a very high priority and it is vigorously promoted. Staff make a lot of effort to encourage good school attendance and young people are well prepared for the school day. All young people have an up-to-date statement of special educational needs. Education and care staff liaise regularly regarding homework and learning objectives. They are supported by the healthy living coordinator. This helps to provide a more consistent approach to supporting young people. Young people learn about diversity through personal health and social education subjects. A computer is available for the young people to use for educational purposes. Therefore, the education of young people is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood.

Young people benefit greatly from the range of activities facilitated both in the home and in the community. Specialist workers are employed to plan, develop and deliver a programme of events that encourages individual interests, play and activities. Examples highlighted include canoeing, trampoline, arts and crafts, photography, music and instruments, football, rugby, cinema, swimming, walking and use of a sports hall. Young people's involvement is enthusiastically supported by staff who explore their individual choices, likes and dislikes. The staff have established very good links and relationships with community based activity providers. There is also a good range of books, toys, DVDs and games available for learning and entertainment. Therefore, young people are able to pursue their particular interests, develop confidence in their skills and they are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. This is an area of outstanding strength.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's referral system enables the manager to fully assess the needs of the young people concerned and to take into account the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents. Admissions to the home are planned and the child or young person and their family, where appropriate, are involved in this. Young people may visit the home before they move in. Therefore, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

Good quality placement plans have been developed. These are supported by the use of health care plans, behaviour management plans, life, social and leisure plans, communication plans, activity plans, daily routines, personal care guidelines and contact plans. The plans are clearly written in a person-centred style. Staff describe the plans as, 'really good' and confirm that they know what action is required of them to meet the needs of the young people. The daily records reflect the content of the care plans and show the action taken by the staff to meet identified needs. These are supplemented by a photograph and description file that documents young people's activities and achievements. Therefore, young people have their needs assessed effectively and written placement plans outline how these needs will be met and how they are implemented. Staffing levels are variable according to the number and needs of the young people.

There is a system for reviewing the placement plans of the children and young people at the home. Statutory case reviews have taken place within the required timescales. Where necessary, reviews are brought forward to address specific concerns or developments in behaviours. This ensures that the young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their progress at the home.

Young people's contact is promoted and facilitated. Staff confirm that young people can keep in touch with people that are important to them and that they can have family come to visit them. A family suite is available to facilitate visits and overnight stays.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way that the home is run. This includes key-worker sessions and day-to-day consultation. Examples of young people's views being acted upon include food, items of furniture, colours, bedding and activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are taught day-to-day life skills according to their level of maturity and understanding. They learn skills through taking part in the tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, handling money and also through completing life learning objectives. They are also given guidance and support with social skills, laundry, clothing care and cleaning. Young people can access the horticultural area, where they help to grow vegetables that are included in the menus. The on-site cinema and bistro enables young people to gain confidence and experience, which they can transfer to venues away from the home. This aspect of the provision is an area of outstanding strength. Transition planning is very well promoted and recorded. Staff describe the process as very good. Therefore, young people receive care which helps to prepare them for adulthood.

The interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair. There is a good maintenance and repair programme for the building, furniture and equipment and any damage is repaired promptly. The outdoor play areas are very well equipped, well maintained and safe. The home is kept clean and there are homely touches throughout.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A Statement of Purpose is available to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. There is a very good children's guide, available in a variety of formats. Before admission, the staff provide as much information as they can about the home to young people, so that they know what to expect if they come to live there.

There is a consistent staff team which has a range of skills and experience amongst its members. Staff refer to written guidance frequently during discussion and give examples of how it is implemented in practice. An example highlighted is the revised egress and medication stock control guidance. Staff supervision is good and it is supported by reflective practice coaching. The healthy living coordinator offers advice and support in matters such as diet, nutrition, activities and leisure.

New members of staff receive very good quality induction training before commencing work with the young people. The organisation's induction training programme is a notable area of strength. Staff describe it as, 'brilliant'. All staff are trained in a wide variety of safety and childcare subjects. An ongoing programme of training is provided, which builds upon staff's existing knowledge and specialist skills to enhance their ability to meet the needs of the young people. The young people are receiving care from competent staff who are experienced and qualified to meet their needs. However, the target of 80 per cent of staff having achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People has not yet been met.

An internal checking system is maintained to monitor the welfare of the children and young people in the home. Monthly audits are undertaken by the manager and unannounced monthly monitoring visits are carried out by the provider. A report of the findings is produced and any action points recorded. This helps to ensure that the care of children and young people is adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. Therefore, there are good measures in place to promote and safeguard the welfare of the children and young people.

Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and they are arranged in a manner which makes them readily accessible to staff. Young people are supported to access their file contents and contribute to them.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Examples of good practice are in areas such as diet, activities, advocacy on complaints due to age and understanding and children's individual rights.

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
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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 a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete a level 3 National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29).