

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sue Winson
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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

This home is a semi-detached house in its own grounds situated on a quiet residential road with access to local shops, schools, public transport and leisure facilities. The service provides care and accommodation for up to four young people of either gender aged from eight to 15 years. There is a focus on meeting the needs of children and young people with behavioural and emotional difficulties through holistic care planning and individual support. The home works together with parents, professionals and external services to meet the needs of young people.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced key inspection considered all key standards in every outcome area. Four young people were present during the inspection. It is an outstanding home where individualised care and high levels of support ensure positive outcomes for young people in all areas. The staff work together with parents, social workers and other professionals to the benefit of the young people. Their health and welfare is safeguarded and all are attending and achieving in education. Young people are integral to decision making and their views make a difference to the service. Equality and diversity is well promoted in all aspects. Staff retention is high and the team work co-operatively to provide consistency and continuity of care, to which the young people respond positively. Quality assurance systems are robust and the manager and staff continually strive for improvement through evaluation and reflective practice. Two recommendations were made in respect of written permission for homely remedies and staff training.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive a healthy and balanced diet and individual diets are well monitored. They are involved in budgeting, shopping and preparing meals and have a choice in what they eat. Staff take opportunities to discuss food hygiene with them. Meals are taken at the table as social occasions and young people can make drinks and snacks. Young people are informed about healthy living and encouraged to take exercise.

Young people's health needs are identified and services are provided to meet them. Comprehensive placement plans outline both physical and emotional health needs and specify how they will be met. These are in line with local authority care plans and are updated monthly in consultation with young people who are encouraged to sign and comment. They are given information about local services which they can access directly. All the young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and the home ensures that they access specialist services. All of the young people benefit from seeing a consultant psychologist who is contracted by the home and who also provides advice and some training to staff. Individual support is given to young people concerning health issues.

The welfare of the young people is largely safeguarded by the home's policies and practices for administering first aid and providing treatment. Full records are maintained and regular stock checks are carried out. Medicines are securely stored and dispensed. The home does not hold written permission for the administration of specific homely remedies and first aid for all the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled. Young people are encouraged to read records which relate to them and arrangements are in place which ensures they do not view information about others. They are able to see visitors, talk to staff and make telephone calls in private.

The home's policies and practices in respect of complaints, safeguarding, bullying and absence without authority promote young people's welfare and protect them. Central records are maintained by the manager for monitoring purposes. Young people know of their right to complain and leaflets with contact numbers of a range of agencies are available to them. Their welfare is promoted effectively and appropriate responses to safeguarding issues have been made, in consultation with local authorities. All significant events are notified to the relevant people in a timely manner. Young people are protected from bullying. They are regularly reminded what constitutes bullying in group and individual sessions. As far as is possible young people are protected when missing from home. Staff follow procedures, try to keep in touch by mobile phone and ensure that young people are seen by someone outside of the home on their return. Individual sessions take place with all the young people concerning keeping safe in the community. Safe caring practices in the home benefit the young people. Their comments included, 'staff talk a lot about keeping safe' and 'I am safe in this house'. They also know that they will be reported as missing if they are late back and said staff do this, 'because they care and are worried'. Positive comments were also made by the local police community support officers, with whom the staff and the young people have good relationships.

Positive behaviour management assists young people in taking responsibility for their actions. Good relationships exist between them and the staff, who encourage,

remind and assist at an early stage to prevent situations from escalating. Young people feel that the rules are fair and reasonable and said that staff 'talk to you in a reasonable adult way'. Reward systems are effective and the young people like the opportunities to achieve their individual goals. No physical interventions have been necessary and sanctions are few, fair and reasonable. A consistent approach across the staff team benefits the young people.

The home provides physical safety and security. All the necessary checks have been carried out within the required timescales and fire checks take place regularly. All the young people have had the opportunity to take part in fire drills. Effective risk assessment and risk management strategies serve to safeguard the young people. These are wide ranging and comprehensive and are updated on a monthly basis.

Recruitment practices and vetting procedures serve to protect young people. All the required information is received prior to staff starting work in the home. A visitors book is used for additional security.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive high levels of individual support. The staff are clearly skilled in engaging young people in innovative and flexible ways. The young people can, and do, approach staff for advice and guidance. Their comments included, 'staff care about you and support you' and 'the best home I have been in'. Staff work in partnership with parents, social workers and other professionals to the benefit of the young people.

Education is well promoted. Young people are attending and achieving in schools and alternative to education placements, with the support of staff and teachers. The home has been successful in sourcing appropriate provision, increasing attendance and facilitating learning for young people who have been out of education for some time. Staff attend meetings and have been active in advocating on young people's behalf. The chairperson of a statutory review commented on this positively. Community involvement is promoted and young people attend local events and are encouraged to join in activities locally and to make friends, who are welcomed in the home. Young people pursue their individual interests in addition to choosing outings and group activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensive and written placement plans outline how they will be met. The plans are updated each month and contain specific strategies which provide useful guidance for staff. Monthly reports demonstrate that young people are making progress. Statutory reviews and planning meetings, attended by the young people, monitor their care. Effective and

focussed care planning informs practice and leads to positive outcomes for young people.

Contact with friends and family is promoted and encouraged in line with care plans. Staff build and maintain positive relationships with parents, where possible, to the benefit of the young people. They keep parents informed of progress and events and where necessary staff take young people to visit their families, sometimes over long distances. Their friends are welcomed in the home.

Young people move into and leave the home in a planned manner wherever possible and staff are sensitive to their feelings. Some have been successfully reunited with their families in line with care planning. Young people are fully involved in decisions about their lives and the way the home is run. They are asked for their views and opinions as part of everyday life and weekly young people's meetings allow for more formal group discussions and decision-making. Most of the records in the home have space for young people to sign and comment, and they often do so. Young people say that they give their opinions, have their say and that their views are listened to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people routinely receive care which prepares them for and supports them into adulthood. Plans are started at an early stage to ensure that young people can establish and build on life skills in a gradual way in line with their abilities. They have the opportunity to budget, shop and prepare meals. All have clothing allowances and like the fact that they are trusted to go out to buy clothes on their own or with friends. They receive regular pocket money and are encouraged to save. There is an appropriate balance between the young people's need for independence and safety issues, based on effective risk assessment.

The house is suitable for purpose and provides sufficient space and adequate facilities to meet the needs of the young people resident. It is well decorated in a homely style and young people have their own bedrooms which they are encouraged to personalise. There is sufficient dining space and rooms are available for young people to see visitors in private. A rolling programme of refurbishment ensures that high standards are maintained.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Equal opportunities and respecting difference runs through the home's policies and practices and staff receive training. Young people are consulted and involved in decision-making at all levels. Individualised care is evident and young people are encouraged to respect one another. Photographs and mementos are kept for young people to take with them when they leave as a record of their life in the home. Staff are focused on them to

achieve their full potential in all areas and will challenge if they feel they are not receiving equality of opportunities due to their care status.

The Statement of Purpose outlines the services provided. The young person's guide meets regulations and is in appropriate language for the young people resident. They have recently been updated to include the change in the registered age range.

Young people receive high levels of care from a stable staff group who have a range of skills, qualifications and experience in the work. They are focused on achieving positive outcomes for young people and are committed to continuing improvement. Cover is provided by bank staff who are known to the young people and who have access to the same training and development opportunities as the full time staff. This ensures continuity of care for the young people is maintained at all times. Very effective use of time ensures that handovers, shift analysis and good communication systems are well established which ensure that staff are informed of any changes which affect the young people. All staff are regularly supervised and well supported. They are positive about the management and leadership in the home and feel valued. There have been some difficulties in accessing staff training from the local authority and the manager is currently looking at alternative providers to meet the deficit.

The home is well managed, efficiently organised and monitoring and auditing is robust. The manager works shifts, in addition to the staffing complement, in order to observe practice in the home on a regular basis. Suitable arrangements are in place for her professional supervision. Visits under Regulation 33 are carried out monthly and comprehensive reports provided which contribute to the robust monitoring systems which ensure that records are up to date and young people's needs are consistently being met. Young people's files are well ordered, up to date and reflect their progress.

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 written permission from a person with parental responsibility is obtained for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication, for all the young people (NMS13.4)
- continue with plans to ensure that staff receive training to meet Appendix 2. (NMS 31)