

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Janet Manders
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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 is operated by the Local Authority. The home forms part of the council's portfolio of services for children and families. The home provides care for up to two young people of either gender, aged between 10 and 18 years who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home aims to provide a safe and caring environment to enable young people to address some of their issues, which in turn will allow them to progress in their daily lives and in education, encouraging them to live and share family values.

The home is a three bedroom property with a large garden to the rear and a small garden at the front. The home is situated in a quiet cul-de-sac, close to local amenities, bus routes, and also the countryside.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection, which looked at key standards of the Children's Homes National Minimum Standards (NMS). The inspection focused on areas relating to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection also concentrated on how the home consults with young people, plans for their care and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the service.

Overall, the home provides a good standard of care for young people. The physical and emotional health needs of the young people are effectively met and young people's education is valued. Staff work hard to keep young people safe. However, the home does not seek young people's views after the use of a restraint. In addition, the appropriateness and effectiveness of the restraint is not always fully evaluated. This has the potential for the appropriateness of such actions not being considered or young people's views being considered. Young people are well supported at the time of their admission to the home and staff provide stable and consistent care for young people and this attributes to positive experiences in growing up.

Staff are supported well by the manager, who has a strong commitment and focus on improvement.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager and staff have worked hard to address issues raised after the last inspection that took place in January 2009, with all five required actions being fully met. Improvements have been made in the recording of case records, including risk assessments, sanctions and placement plans. All staff have undertaken first aid training so that there is a qualified member of staff on duty at all times and a night time fire drill has been undertaken.

The five recommendations regarding the administration of medication, impact assessment at the time of a young person's admissions and monitoring the home against the home's Statement of Purpose have all been fully met.

This ensures that young people's health is safeguarded, that young people's placements are suitable and that the home is monitored in a robust way to ensure that the standard of care is continually improving.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are receiving a good service that is focused on their emotional wellbeing and health needs. Staff actively encourage young people to lead a healthy life. Staff are supported in this because the company has developed clear guidance regarding promoting and safeguarding young people's health.

Meal times are social occasions where young people and staff sit together. Staff promote healthy eating and provide nutritious meals that meet young people's dietary, ethnic and religious needs. Fruit is always available for the young people to help themselves to. Young people have opportunities to plan, shop for and assist with the preparation of meals.

The health and care needs of young people are identified and updated regularly. A health plan for each young person details how their specific and general health issues are to be addressed and staff work closely with the Looked After Children's (LAC) Nurse and other health professionals to ensure that these identified health needs are addressed. All young people are registered with the required health professionals when they are admitted to the home. Young people are referred to other specialist agencies where this is required. Staff record and monitor young people's health appointments, accidents and illnesses and where appropriate take action, to ensure that their health needs are met.

Medication is handled well. The files for the young people contain signed medical consent forms, a record of all prescribed and non-prescribed medication and whether it has been taken. The home has procedures in place to ensure that medicines are appropriately handled and stored to safeguard young people's welfare. In addition, the home has policies that address all aspects of medication including the use of homely remedies. Young people are allowed to self-medicate, with staff undertaking appropriate risk assessments to ascertain whether young people are sufficiently mature and have sufficient understanding to administer their own medication.

Staff receive training in the administration of medication and first aid. This ensures that young people's health needs are appropriately addressed and promoted.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people live in a home where staff understand their role and responsibilities for keeping young people safe. Safeguarding procedures are in place; staff are trained and are aware of what to do if they are concerned about a young person's safety or protection.

Staff are aware of their responsibilities to promote privacy and confidentiality. Staff do not enter young people's rooms without permission, except when young people are considered at risk. The authority has developed a clear policy in relation to when a young person's belongings need to be searched and a record is made of the search within the young person's file and in a central log. Young people have access to a telephone, which allows private conversation,

when this is an agreed part of their placement plan and information held in respect of young people is stored in lockable facilities which are only accessible to staff.

Young people are encouraged to raise grumbles with staff so that such issues can be considered and resolved at an early stage. The home has good systems in place for managing more serious complaints. Young people understand how to make a complaint if they have any concerns about their care and they are confident that staff listen to them and take appropriate action when necessary. Each young person's right to complain is supported by the staff team and young people have access to independent advocates whose contact details are included in the Children's Guide.

Young people are protected because staff recognise and understand their role in child protection and that they know what action to take if there are concerns. All staff receive training in child protection and demonstrate a sound knowledge of policies and procedures. Young people live in a home where bullying is not allowed and where any form of unwanted behaviour is challenged. Staff monitor young people's interactions to minimise the opportunity for bullying to take place. Risk assessments are completed to guide staff members' intervention.

Unauthorised absences are well recorded with staff having clear protocols about informing the appropriate authorities. The home recognises that absent young people may put themselves at risk and make all efforts to help young people to find ways to keep themselves safe, for example, encouraging young people to use their mobile telephones to maintain contact with the home.

Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Staff provide regular and specific feedback to young people about their behaviour with a clear focus on setting fair and reasonable boundaries. Young people understand what is expected of them and they are rewarded for good behaviour. All staff receive training in the use of physical intervention but this is only used as a last resort. Records show a fair and equitable approach taken by staff. However, the manager does not regularly comment on the appropriateness of the restraint and young people are not given the opportunity to have their views recorded.

The home has a range of risk assessments, which are intended to minimise any health and safety risks to young people and staff. Fire fighting equipment is regularly monitored and regular fire drills are undertaken to ensure that staff and young people are aware how to safely evacuate the property.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive good levels of support because the manager and staff team provide a service that is flexible and responsive to individual needs.

Young people in the home receive a range of individual support and guidance in relation to their identified needs. All staff are aware of the details of each young person's placement plan and offer appropriate support when necessary. Staff respect and value diversity and young people receive appropriate external support as the home has a proactive approach to working with other professionals. The home's records reflect the diverse and individualised needs of each young person.

The home actively encourages young people's education and staff work hard to support young people to achieve full-time attendance in education. On occasions there are difficulties in identifying appropriate full-time education for some young people. In such circumstances the manager and staff strongly advocate for the young people with the authority to ensure that young people are able to attend a suitable school. Unfortunately they are not always successful. In these circumstances staff encourage young people to be involved in educational activities within the home and the local community.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's care is planned by the home so that staff are clear what support young people require for their needs to be met. Young people are encouraged and supported to be involved in this planning process.

Each young person has a placement plan which is used alongside other information to ensure the home's staff are fully informed about individual needs. All staff are aware of the young people's needs so that they can assist in meeting them. Young people's statutory reviews are taking place and the home contributes to this process. Staff ensure that the needs, wishes and feelings of young people are considered and identified needs are addressed. Young people are encouraged to participate in their review meeting to ensure that the placement plan continues to be appropriate and that their needs are being met.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with their family, friends and other significant people, where there are no restrictions. Staff place a high importance on the promotion of appropriate family contact, they understand the value and meaning to young people of these arrangements and work hard to ensure contact is positive. Where this is not the case, staff provide excellent emotional support to try and counter difficult or upsetting experiences.

Staff endeavour to gather all appropriate information before a young person is admitted to the home to ensure that the placement is suitable for them and that staff will be able to meet their needs. Young people are well supported by staff at the time of their admission to the home, with young people receiving clear guidance regarding the routines of the home, the home's expectation of them and what they can expect from staff. Where possible, young people are encouraged to visit the home to meet the staff and other young people prior to being admitted to the home.

Staff demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of young people because they involve young people in all aspects of their care. For example, young people are supported to attend LAC review meetings with staff to discuss their needs. Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are appropriately supported to prepare for leaving the home whether this is to return home, to alternative carers or to move into independent living. Staff provide practical opportunities for young people so they experience routines that relate to being responsible and independent. Young people are assisted to develop self care skills, even where an agreed

Pathway Plan for the young person is not in place. Staff actively advocate for the young people to ensure that they receive appropriate support.

Young people are provided with a safe and comfortable home which is domestic in style and layout. The accommodation is maintained to a good standard and it is kept clean and tidy. Young people are provided with individual bedrooms which are suitably maintained and personalised to their own tastes. The home provides young people with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities with appropriate locks to ensure their privacy is maintained. Suitable laundry facilities are also provided to meet the needs of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people live in a well managed home where staff are supported to work effectively in achieving outcomes outlined in individual plans of care.

Information about the home's operation is clearly reflected in the statement of purpose. The young person's guide also provides the right information in a readable format that outlines what can be expected from the home. The home has a set of comprehensive policies and procedures to guide the staff in their work with the young people.

There is a clear staffing structure with defined lines of accountability in the home. There are appropriate arrangements in place in the absence of the registered manager, with the manager from one of the sister homes providing appropriate support to staff. The home does not use staff from external agencies, stating that achieving continuity of staffing offers the young people more stability. Therefore, with the assistance of staff from other homes within the authority, the staff group covers any absence or sick leave of their colleagues or any requirement to have extra staff on duty. This ensures consistency of care for young people.

Staffing is sufficient in number and competence to ensure that young people's needs are adequately addressed. There is a good mix of gender and background within the staff team to promote young people's identity and well-being. Staff training is effective and well coordinated to ensure that staff acquire necessary skills and maintain statutory competences. The number of staff achieving the National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People exceeds requirements.

The manager has developed a clear process to monitor the quality of care being provided by the home. Young people's feedback contributes to this process and helps to positively influence the operation of the home. The home's records are of a good standard and provide a comprehensive record of young people's time at the home. This can assist with future placement planning. Young people's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are cared for by staff who have a good knowledge and awareness about each young person's needs. This is because the home obtains a range of information to ensure each plan of care is individualised. In addition, young people are provided with a caring and supportive environment where differences are understood and where everyone is treated fairly and with equal concern.

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 all records of restraints include a full evaluation of their appropriateness and effectiveness. NMS 22.11
- provide young people an opportunity to have their views recorded and to sign their name in the record of all restraints and sanctions. NMS 22.14.