

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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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 service is a private children's home, registered to care for up to two children between the ages of 10 years and 17 years of age.

The property is a large terraced house, domestic in character and well maintained. There are four bedrooms located on the first floor; two are used by young people and two by sleeping-in night staff. There is a bathroom, with shower facility, and a separate toilet. The office is situated on the ground floor, along with the lounge, kitchen and separate dining room.

Throughout, the property is comfortable, domestic and homely. There is good access to a wide range of local amenities, which are used routinely by young people and staff. The home also has its own vehicle which enables the young person to access facilities further afield.

Young people were present during this unannounced visit and participated in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced key inspection all key national minimum standards were examined. This is a good children's home with the staff team working well to achieve good outcomes for young people. The service provides a nurturing, positive and stable environment. An outstanding feature of this home is the positive relationship that staff build with young people.

Following this inspection one action and three recommendations were made.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in April 2010 one recommendation was made in respect of records relating to young people's reparation. While the specific matter raised has been addressed these records are not consistently of a good standard and a further recommendation is made in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good care planning that promotes their overall health and well-being.

Staff work hard to ensure that young people have a healthy and nutritious diet. Meals are home cooked and young people are very involved in menu planning. Young people are given excellent opportunities to prepare and cook meals. A diverse range of products and ingredients are provided to meet individual needs and preferences. Young people are encouraged to try new recipes to develop a healthy and balanced diet. There is good recognition of the social importance of mealtimes and young people are provided with opportunities to eat out.

Young people have their health needs thoroughly assessed and recorded in an individual health plan. The service can access a range of specialist services to ensure that individual assessed needs are met. Good records are maintained evidencing the range of health services accessed by young people. Staff encourage young people to take exercise and participate in a wide range of physical activities, such as horse riding, walking and swimming.

Appropriate procedures are in place in respect of the management and administration of medication and staff are provided with suitable training. All staff have ongoing first aid training and there is always a first aid member of staff on duty.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The service has policies and procedures in place to ensure that young people are safe and staff work hard to encourage young people to develop personal responsibility.

Staff promote the privacy of young people and respect the right of young people to have personal information treated confidentially. Staff are very respectful of the young people in their care and develop professional and caring relationships with them. Young people have a single bedroom with a lockable facility and staff are very mindful of their right to privacy.

The service has an established complaints procedure. This is known to the young people, who confirm that they would feel confident in raising any concerns with staff. Staff and young people have established a very open and positive rapport. The quality of their relations means that any issues can be raised more easily and resolved quickly. Complaints are dealt with positively and in a timely manner. The home has also received compliments in praise of the standard of care.

Young people are protected by staff who know how to keep them safe. Staff are trained in safeguarding, covering a range of areas that help to inform their practice. Staff prioritise the interests of young people and approach the police and safeguarding team as appropriate for advice and assistance. Young people confirm they feel safe at the home.

A policy to counter bullying is in place and young people are aware that bullying is not acceptable. Young people are provided with written information and have access to helpline telephone numbers. Staff work hard to help young people develop a better understanding of what constitutes bullying and what action they should take if they are bullied.

The protection of young people who go missing from home without authority is excellent. Risk assessments are implemented and staff contact young people on their mobile phones, encourage them to return and monitor their movements. Staff follow clear missing from home protocols, which includes contact with the police, social workers and parents. Young people have access to independent specialist workers who engage with them to identify and discourage behaviours that places them at risk. These measures effectively contribute to the reduction of young people going missing.

Staff have developed excellent strategies to care for young people and manage their behaviour. They know how to promote positive behaviour and are trained in an approved behaviour management technique. Young people have very positive and trusting relationships with staff and respond positively to clear, firm boundaries and behaviour management strategies. Young people are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to consider the consequences of their behaviour in a mature way. Young people confirm that staff treat them very well. Staff use a system of consequences and incentives to encourage young people to develop acceptable behaviour. Sanctions are rarely used, but if deliberate damage is done to property then a financial reparation is imposed as it is felt that this enables young people to focus on the consequences of unacceptable behaviour. Since a recommendation was made at the last inspection, records pertaining to reparation has improved. However, not all records are of a consistently good standard. The home's policy regarding physical intervention is based primarily on de-escalation techniques. All staff, with the exception of a newly appointed bank member of staff, have had accredited training and refresher training is scheduled for December 2010. This ensures that young people are supported appropriately by staff who have received specialist training in managing challenging behaviour that focuses on de-escalation. This is borne out by the fact that there have been no incidents of restraint used in respect of young people currently living at the service and the last physical intervention was July 2009.

Young people are cared for in an environment that effectively protects their health and safety. There is an ongoing programme of redecoration, repairs and refurbishment to maintain good standards throughout. Fire safety checks are regularly undertaken and fire drills are done at appropriate intervals. Young people are involved so that they know what to do in the event of a fire. Risk assessments

identify young people's known behaviours and strategies to reduce risks.

Comprehensive staff recruitment and vetting procedures are in place ensuring young people are supported by staff who have had suitable checks. Visitors to the home are also robustly checked by staff. These good practices ensure the protection of young people from people who may pose a risk to them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff support young people to develop skills and confidence in a range of social, domestic and learning settings.

Young people are supported by a key worker system and one-to-one staffing. Staff are skilled at developing an open and positive rapport with young people and young people know what is expected of them and the reason why acceptable boundaries are in place. Staff have a very good understanding about young people's individual needs and are very supportive.

Staff actively promote and support young people's education and attainment. Staff value the benefits of a good education. Young people attend education facilities, whether mainstream, alternative or home education, that best meets their needs and abilities.

Young people are encouraged to get involved in leisure activities. This helps them to develop their confidence and social skills. For example, young people are given opportunities to explore known interests and talents while also having opportunities to try new activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with opportunities to make a positive contribution while living at the service and staff work hard to enable them to achieve good outcomes from their placement.

The needs of young people are comprehensively assessed. There is a clear decision-making process regarding admission and discharge of young people. This ensures that young people are appropriately placed and their needs can be met by the home. Detailed and informative documents are provided to inform placements. Staff chase up missing documents and liaise closely with the young person's social worker. Comprehensive placement plans are developed by the home. These outcome-based plans demonstrate how young people's assessed needs will be met by the home.

The placement planning and review process reinforces the involvement of services provided, such as education, social care, health, police, youth offending service and

independent agencies. Young people respond positively to these interventions and understand the benefits. Young people's statutory reviews are held at regular intervals. Young people are encouraged to participate and express their views.

Contact is actively promoted. Staff have a commitment to ensuring that young people remain in contact with their family, friends and home area. They may also facilitate contact, by transporting young people and providing financial assistance. These are good arrangements that promote young people's sense of identity.

Young people are regularly consulted. They have very positive relationships with staff and talk to them about lots of different issues. There are further opportunities for consultation in key work sessions and informal discussions with staff. Young people's meetings and visits from an advocate provide young people with further opportunities to be consulted. Staff are respectful to young people, listening and acting on what they have to say. Young people feel well consulted and confirm that they are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff work hard to promote the economic well-being of young people. They also benefit from a well maintained and homely environment.

Young people are encouraged to learn skills appropriate to their age and which will prepare them for adulthood. Young people receive appropriate pocket money and individual allocation of monies for routine expenses such as clothing, hair and gifts. Additional funds can be earned through individual incentive schemes.

The physical environment is comfortable and homely. Young people are encouraged to personalise their rooms and make use of the personal and communal space available to them. The home is not conspicuous as a children's home and is located in a pleasant residential area close to social and community facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a well managed service that provides a comfortable, stable and nurturing environment and achieves good outcomes for young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's individual and diverse needs are well met and are well evidenced in all outcome areas. There is a good gender balance in the team. Staff have a good understanding of young people and ensure that their social inclusion is promoted. Evidence also supports that the service has a commitment to further improve equality and diversity within the service to enhance outcomes for young people.

The service has a written Statement of Purpose and a separate service user guide, both of which are informative and up-to-date.

Young people are looked after by enough staff who are competent to care for them and meet their needs. Staff are well retained, which provides young people with consistent people around them. The team is led by a qualified and experienced Registered Manager who is normally supported by a skilled and competent deputy. Due to personal reasons, this member of staff is absent from her post and is likely to be for a considerable time and so far suitable arrangements have not been put in place to fill this senior role within the home. This is important in ensuring that the management of the home remains consistently good. Staff absences are routinely covered by bank staff. These are the same workers that the young people are familiar with.

Staff are regularly supervised and appraised and a rolling programme of training is promoted. Staff feel well supported and are committed to their work with young people. Young people benefit from a staff team who care about them and promote their welfare.

A comprehensive rolling programme of training is provided, including mandatory and specialist areas of training. The induction programme for new staff, while comprehensive, is not always provided within the required six week timescale. This means that young people are not consistently supported by suitably trained staff. There is a good commitment to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) training. The manager has NVQ at level 4 in Leadership and Management and of the permanent staff 60% have achieved NVQ at level 3 and the remaining 40% are part way through. Bank staff also have the same training opportunities as permanent staff, including NVQ.

Young people's files are well maintained and demonstrate their progress. The standard of recording is good, but files do not contain a recent photograph of the young person, which is especially useful, for example, if the young person goes missing from the home.

The Registered Manager undertakes a monthly quality audit and is line managed by an area manager who also has responsibility for quality monitoring visits. Regulation 33 visits are routinely undertaken and detailed reports forwarded to Ofsted.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
31	ensure that all persons employed in the home receive appropriate training, including the provision of a full induction within six weeks of joining the home. (Regulation 27, NMS 31.3)	31/12/2010

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure records relating to reparation include all required details as authorised by the registered person (NMS 22.9 and 22.10)
- ensure that staffing arrangements for sickness and absence enable the home's staffing policy to be maintained, specifically in respect of covering the senior/deputy post (NMS 30.7)
- ensure each young person's file contains all the necessary information, including a recent photograph. (NMS 35.2)