

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 home is registered to provide care and accommodation for two children of either sex aged between 10 and 17 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All young people are placed in the home by the local authority in which the home is situated.

The home supports young people until they move into more independent living accommodation or are able to return to their family home.

The home is a three bedroom semi-detached house, situated in a housing estate in a quiet cul-de-sac, within easy reach of bus routes to a town centre. It has a garden to the rear of the property and large driveway to the front for parking.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced inspection covering all the outcome areas below and to check compliance with the required improvements from the last inspection.

The overall quality rating is good. The home is well managed and provides positive outcomes for the young people living there, described by one young person as 'mint'. There are good arrangements to protect the health, welfare and safety of young people and promote their educational achievements.

This is a small home with a pleasant homely atmosphere, run with traditional family values. Both the size of the home and philosophy of care help achieve good outcomes for young people.

As a result of this inspection the registered provider is required to make three improvements: ensure the bathroom can be opened safely from the outside in an emergency; obtain better assessment information prior to admitting a young person; and improve the records of individual diets.

Improvements since the last inspection

There is better practice with regards to encouraging young people to discuss incidents of unsafe behaviour and express their views about measures of discipline. This helps young people to develop better strategies for managing their own behaviour and have a say in the rules of the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There are effective arrangements for supporting young people to have healthy lifestyles, ensuring their health care needs are met and good health is promoted and protected.

Young people's health needs are clearly assessed and identified and staff use this information to help ensure young people receive good healthcare. Young people are actively involved in planning their health care and they get plenty of support and encouragement to take an interest in their own health. Young people receive advice and support about a wide range of health and social issues, such as healthy eating, smoking, alcohol, substance misuse and sexual health. Staff ensure young people have access to a range of health services to meet their individual needs. Young people have regular opportunities to take part in physical and sports activities to help keep fit and healthy.

Young people contribute to the menus and have some opportunities to budget, shop, prepare and cook meals. Meals are cooked both by staff and young people. Food reflects young people's choices and needs. Menus reflect suitably nutritious and wholesome diets but there are no records of individual young people's actual diets. On this occasion this shortfall has not been judged to impact on outcomes for young people and staff have helped young people diet successfully. Mealtimes are, sociable, flexible and young people have access to the kitchen when they want.

Staff are trained in first aid in the event of any accidents and there are good, safe procedures for ensuring young people get any necessary medication at the right times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good policies, procedures and practice that ensure their safety is protected and they are kept free from harm. Staff have safeguarding training, know how to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and know the correct procedures to report any concerns. There are established links with the local authority safeguarding team and there is effective safeguarding action to ensure the welfare of young people is protected.

Staff actively encourage young people to have good social behaviour. There are incentives for young people to behave well based on their individual needs and there are plenty of discussions to help promote good behaviour. Young people are clear about accepted standards of behaviour and agree that rules and sanctions are fair. As a safety necessity staff will physically intervene if young people's behaviour is putting them or others at risk of harm. Staff are trained how to do this in a safe way. Good records are kept of any incidents and young people are encouraged to discuss

these with staff in an effort to prevent unsafe behaviour being repeated. This has improved since the last inspection. Incidents are monitored well by the manager to ensure there is safe appropriate practice and young people are protected.

There is an effective approach to tackling any form of bullying helping to ensure that young people are able to live at the home free from being bullied. Staff help resolve disputes and there is suitable supervision of young people to minimise any risks of bullying. Staff encourage an atmosphere of respect and acceptance, which is helped by the small size of the home, with only two young people living there.

Staff are proactive in getting young people back home safely when they go missing. As an extra precaution young people always have the opportunity to talk to some one independent of the home afterwards. This gives young people the chance to talk about any worries they have that they might not want to talk to staff about. The frequency of young people missing from care varies. However when young people are missing regularly a range of agencies are involved in developing appropriate strategies to keep young people safe. This practice is a notable strength of the home.

Young people can have a key to their bedroom and there are lockable bathrooms to bath in private. Staff are not able to open the bathroom door in an emergency as it can be bolted shut from the inside. This shortfall has not been judged to impact on the safety of young people on this occasion.

Written records about young people are kept secure and confidential in the office. Young people know they can look at their records and add their own comments if they want to. Young people know how to make a complaint, staff are good at listening to them and there is a good response to their complaints.

There are effective procedures for the recruitment of new staff to make sure only suitable staff are employed. The home is safe, well maintained and visitors are monitored to ensure the safety of young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements for supporting young people to achieve a good education and enjoy a range of leisure and social activities.

Young people have positive views of the home, staff and how they are cared for and supported. For example young people commented 'there is nothing to improve and staff are mint'. Each young person has a good placement plan detailing the support they will get while they are living at the home. Staff are flexible and open to supporting a wide range of needs and have developed links with other agencies to help provide young people additional support. Young people think that staff are very approachable and will do their best to help them out.

Staff are very keen to promote educational achievements, whether at mainstream schools and colleges or in alternative settings. Staff have developed links with a range of educational settings which young people attend. Young people have good attendance and staff are effective at giving young people practical and emotional support to do well.

Young people are supported well to take part in range of leisure and social activities both in and outside the home. Young people benefit from being able to pursue their hobbies and interests, develop their skills and self-esteem.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There is a thorough and effective admissions process for supporting young people to settle into their new home. Procedures allow for planned and sensitive arrangements as well as young people moving in in more emergent circumstances. Risks are well managed to try and ensure that the impact of any new young people moving in is positive for all young people living at the home.

Each young person has a good individual person-centred plan, which thoroughly details the support a young person will receive from the home. These are based on assessment information about a young person's needs and take account of the potential risks to their welfare and safety. This is not helped by the placing authority who have not provided the home with detailed and comprehensive assessment information for all young people placed at the home. On this occasion this is not judged to have significantly impacted on outcomes for young people.

Individual plans also include specific individual, cultural and religious needs. Young people have the opportunity to be fully involved in writing their plans and have regular time with staff to talk about their progress and any concerns. Young people's plans are reviewed regularly with them. Their views and wishes are listened to, respected and influence how they are looked after. There are good relationships between young people and staff, who provide a nurturing and caring environment helping young people to develop well.

Young people regularly see their relatives and friends as long as this is in line with their placement plan and is not putting them at risk of harm. There is good support from the home to help young people with travel arrangements to ensure contact is maintained.

Young people's views are valued and there is good practice to make sure they can influence their lives and the management of the home. Young people feel listened to, respected and valued and there is a good response to their views and wishes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people benefit well from the support and arrangements to help them develop independent living skills and prepare for the transition to adulthood. They are able to stay at the home until they are ready to move to more independent living accommodation or return home to their families. Young people are supported to budget, shop, cook meals and do their laundry. Staff help ensure young people know about their local and wider community and understand that they are part of a diverse community. Young people are supported to use community amenities and public transport. There is a positive impact for young people with good opportunities to develop life skills, boosting their confidence and self-esteem.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation that is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. There is plenty of space and a good range of facilities. Young people have their own bedrooms and there are ample bathing facilities. There is a lounge, kitchen diner and good sized garden. The home is a domestic family type property and young people benefit from the warm homely environment it provides.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a good Statement of Purpose available, to inform professionals and members of the public about how care is provided at the home. Before admission staff will also provide as much information as they can about the home to young people so that they know what to expect if they go to stay there. Young people get to keep a user-friendly guide to the home to refer to, which helps explain the rules and routines. This is being developed into a DVD with input from young people, which is good practice.

Young people benefit from being looked after by a competent staff team which has a broad range of skills and experience among its members. There are good deputising arrangements in the manager's absence and young people benefit from suitable staffing levels so there is enough support with their care, education, activities, family contact, meetings and appointments.

Staff undertake a range of training helping them develop and maintain skills and knowledge to provide good quality care. This is also reflected in the fact that all staff have achieved the recommended care qualification for working with children and young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care is based on young people's individual needs and there are good outcomes for young people as a result. Staff have been trained in diversity and ensure that diverse needs of young people are met. Record keeping is good, which reflects the individuality, needs, progress and

development of young people.

The manager is competent and there are suitable management systems to ensure that the care of young people is of good quality and is properly monitored. This includes regular checks by the manager as well as those done by an independent visitor on behalf of the registered provider. These help ensure that any issues are identified and are responded to promptly.

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 the record of menus (as served) demonstrates the provision of a suitable and varied diet (NMS 10.4)
- ensure staff are able to open the doors to bathrooms from the outside in case of an emergency (NMS 25.6)
- ensure there is a copy in the home of an effective assessment of each individual young person's needs prior to admission to the home, including an up to date core assessment, detailed chronology and any assessments completed by other professionals relevant to the young person's needs. (NMS 2)