

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

This home provides two placements for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service is one of three small homes operated locally by the organisation, in addition to registered services in other regions. The service also provides a school setting within easy travelling distance, which is available to meet the needs of children who have no current mainstream school placement.

Children have individual bedrooms and open access to a range of communal living areas. There is a garden providing space for games or relaxation.

Two children currently live in this home, both were present and participated in this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced inspection of this service, planned to review care arrangements and outcomes for children against key national minimum standards. The progress the provider has made with a required action and recommendations set on the last visit was also reviewed. The service is judged as good overall.

The home is well managed and children are cared for by competent and caring staff. Care arrangements are well planned and the progress children make is kept under review. Staying safe arrangements are prioritised and a well-maintained environment is provided. Children are supported to lead a healthy lifestyle and their general well-being is promoted. They are consulted about care arrangements and receive a good level of individual support.

Recommendations have been set in relation to the development of a stock record for medication held in the home, and also to reflect into procedures new guidance for fire evacuation arrangements.

Improvements since the last inspection

The provider has taken action to improve the records kept in relation to behaviour management. Documents are now found to reflect the areas of record keeping required by children's homes regulations.

There is improved guidance for staff in relation to safeguarding arrangements. Risk assessments are now well detailed and are updated as needs change.

There is improved evidence that placing social workers are consulted about, and are able to comment on, written placement plans.

A recommendation was made on the last inspection about the recording of complaints. The provider response to complaints is now found to be appropriately detailed in records. However, complaints dealt with by letter are not cross referenced into the hand written complaints log held in the home. As a result complaints may be difficult to audit and a further recommendation about complaints has been made.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children are supported to be healthy and are given guidance which encourages them to make positive choices about their own health. Children's health is monitored by staff who have a good awareness of the specific and the general health needs of children staying at this home. Children are registered with a local general practitioner. They are supported to attend for expected check-ups and when necessary for further appointments with a dentist and optician. Health care needs are clarified within detailed health care plans, which set out clear guidance for the staff who care for children. Where required therapeutic interventions are incorporated into placement arrangements, guided by qualified mental health professionals working for the provider organisation.

Children are encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle and understand that physical activity is important for good health. Care plans detail programmes of physical activity within weekly care arrangements. Comments from children include 'I go out and play football with staff'.

A balanced and varied diet is provided. Comments from children include 'yes, I have been taught about healthy eating' and 'the food here is really good'. Children are able to take part in shopping for groceries and are encouraged to assist with food preparation. As a result children develop new skills and feel involved. Food safety systems are operated and staff undertake basic food hygiene training.

Medication is stored securely and a record is maintained on each occasion medication is administered to a child. The medication system is monitored by the acting manager and also by external managers who visit the home. Consent is obtained from an individual with parental responsibility to support the service to meet arising needs with over the counter medication. However, the limited stock of homely remedies is not supported by a stock control system. As a result the system is difficult to audit effectively.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Children are safeguarded by the services provided at this home. Safeguarding policies and procedures and staff training underpin and inform the protection of children. Safeguarding children is prioritised within care planning and risk management strategies.

Children are protected by robust staff recruitment procedures. All required checks are undertaken prior to staff commencing work in the home.

Children are cared for in a safe environment. Staff and children are taught about fire safety and evacuation drills are undertaken. Service contracts are in place with fire safety agencies who visit the home and check fire safety equipment. Environmental and individual risk assessments are undertaken and recorded clearly to inform staff practice. However, the current locking of a side gate has not been captured in the fire evacuation procedures. This raises the potential that staff and children may not know where to gather in the case of a fire in the home. A range of health and safety monitoring checks are undertaken including, fire alarms, emergency lighting and carbon monoxide.

There is good supervision of children individually and also close monitoring of interactions. As a result staff step in promptly when issues arise. There have been no occasions of children going missing since the last inspection.

Children know how to make a complaint and confirm that they are confident that any complaint would be addressed. A record is maintained of complaints received about the service. However, complaints sent to and responded to by external managers are not always cross-referenced into the home's complaints log. As a result it becomes more difficult for the manager to effectively monitor complaints received about the service.

Behaviour is well managed. The organisation has policies and procedures to address bullying and children are encouraged to report any concerns about bullying. Detailed behaviour management plans are produced and implemented in practice. Behaviour management strategies are regularly reviewed by therapeutic staff working for the organisation. There is evidence that there is close management oversight of the use of sanctions or physical intervention. Comments from children include 'one of the reasons I feel safe here is that staff know how to deal with behaviour' also confirming that 'staff talk to us about behaviour'.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive a good level of support and encouragement to achieve with their education and also to learn new skills within the home. The provider

organisation operates a local school which at the point of admission is likely to be the identified school for children. Where appropriate children are supported to move on to mainstream school placements. The intense support provided by care staff during the school day means that children receive the guidance and encouragement they need to succeed. Comments from children include 'staff always help me with my homework, if I need it'.

Care arrangements are reviewed and informed by appropriately experienced and qualified therapeutic staff. Well-planned care supports each child's development and encourages them to reach identified goals. Individual key workers provide children with support and guidance. One-to-one therapeutic intervention is also made available for children, in agreement with placing authorities. Children confirm that they feel supported and are able to talk to staff if they feel worried. Comments from children include 'the staff are tremendous' and 'staff spend time with you when you feel upset'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Children receive a good level of support when they are first admitted to the home. They are issued with a written guide which clarifies the service they can expect to receive. Comments from children include 'I was made to feel really welcome on the first day I came here'.

A thorough assessment of need is undertaken which informs the development of detailed individual placement plans. Placing social workers and children are made aware of the content of the placement plan. Children are supported to attend and to contribute to review meetings. This means that children are aware of agreed plans for their care and have an opportunity to make their views known. Care arrangements support children to maintain contact with family members. Placement plans clarify agreed contact arrangements and levels of required supervision and support. Children's comments include 'if there is any change to my contact arrangements staff always tell me beforehand'.

Children are consulted about day-to-day care arrangements. Weekly meetings are held during which children are encouraged to reflect on the previous week. This time also provides the opportunity to raise concerns and to make suggestions for the week ahead. One-to-one time with key workers offers a further opportunity for children's views to be heard. Comments from children include 'staff always talk to us' also confirming 'yes I feel listened to by staff'. Children are involved in planning activities and the weekly menu. As a result they feel consulted about care arrangements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Children are cared for in a well-maintained and homely living environment. Good accommodation and facilities are provided, which support both individual and group requirements. There is space for children to spend time alone or to receive visitors in private. The home is appropriately decorated and furnished to a modern style. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms.

The daily culture and routine encourages children to develop an appropriate level of independence. They are expected to maintain bedroom tidiness and are encouraged to undertake limited household chores. Children are encouraged to budget their pocket money, including saving for larger items. There are no children currently in residence of an age to require a formal pathway plan.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose is kept under review and reflects the services and facilities provided. A guide is issued to children when they are first admitted to the home, this provides a summary of key information from the Statement of Purpose.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Children are cared for by a diverse staff team who talk openly with children about issues of equality and diversity. Assessed individual needs are identified and are planned for to a good standard. Staff support children to develop a sense of identity and also create new opportunities for them. Children are taught about other cultures. For example a 'culture board' is used to display information.

There is currently a vacancy for the position of Registered Manager. However, a new manager is now in position and has commenced the process of applying to Ofsted for the registered position. A deputy manager takes on management responsibility when necessary. While there have been several changes in this small staff team over the last few months, there is now a full team who have a good range of skills and experience to support their roles. Children are highly supervised at all times by staff who understand their role in the management of risk and the promotion of children's well-being. The management team monitor the quality of care through continuous review and evaluation of the service.

New staff undertake an induction programme during which there is regular assessment of their developing knowledge over the first six months of employment. The organisation facilitates a core training programme for all staff, with refresher courses provided at designated intervals. Training includes, fire safety, food hygiene, behaviour management and safeguarding children.

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 fire evacuation procedures and the fire safety risk assessment are updated to reflect the temporary locking of the side gate leading from the rear garden (NMS 26.2)
- ensure that there are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. In particular this relates to the need to develop a stock control system for medication received into the home. (NMS 33.1)