

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Michelle Moss
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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 children's home is an detached house set in its own gardens and it is situated in a residential area, within easy travelling distance of the town centre. Most of the sleeping accommodation, including staff sleeping-in facilities, is sited on the upper floor of the home. The ground floor contains three lounge areas for young people's use, a dining room, large fitted kitchen and utility room. The home can accommodate a maximum of four young people of either gender. All young people accommodated are allocated their own individual single bedrooms. The organisation operates an appropriately registered school in a nearby town and young people accommodated attend this school to receive their formal education. The home provides a minimum of one-to-one staff support for all young people, at all times, with some young people receiving two-to-one staff support.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This is the home's first full inspection since their registration. The visit was conducted unannounced and involved assessing all key standards across all Every Child Matters outcomes to help form a judgement on the provision of care. The home provides a good service to young people across all Every Child Matters outcomes. Young people are supported to stay healthy, feel safe, and to achieve educationally and socially through learning and leisure opportunities, that help them prepare for adulthood. There are a couple of areas where weaknesses exist. These include the care of medication, providing information to families and staffing. However, these shortfalls are outweighed by the strengths including the ambition of the organisation to improve in the interests of young people.

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have two health plans which collectively provide staff with a holistic view of their health needs. These demonstrate that young people are receiving effective healthcare, assessment, treatment and support to enhance their well-being. This extends to having good access to an array of health related services designed to meet their emotional, mental and physical needs. The staff provide young people

with support to use local facilities to enable them to stay physically active and also to build self-esteem and confidence through increased opportunities.

The home ensures that prior written permission from families is obtained for administering medicines and first aid. Records are kept for all prescribed medication. However, although these provide a reasonable audit trail there are occasional missed signatures to validate medication has been administered. For example, some young people's medication was not signed out on the day of the inspection. Furthermore, the procedures for ensuring medication is carefully audited and stock levels significantly maintained, are not robust. This results in the home not always maintaining the required stock levels to ensure young people can continually receive the required dosage of medicine prescribed by their doctor. Nevertheless, once errors are identified there are clear procedures for management to undertake a full investigation.

Menus demonstrate a varied diet is offered which reflects young people's individual preferences. This includes young people being able to experience new dishes. The information provided to young people on meals reflects their method of communication. This enhances consultation on meal planning. Young people play an active role in preparing meals with support of staff. These opportunities help them build skills that they can transfer as they move into adulthood.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have diverse needs and abilities which are understood by staff. The staff team demonstrate in their care of young people that they respect their rights to privacy. For example, staff will always knock on a young person's door before entering and respect young people's bedrooms as their private space. There are good systems in place to ensure information held about young people is handled appropriately to protect their personal information. There is good information available in suitable formats to match young people's preferred method of communication. This enables them to complain, whistle-blow, or get help and support from either staff or outside organisation. However, the home has not informed families about the complaints procedure to ensure they are as equally informed of their rights to raise concerns and know how they will be addressed. The staff are skilful and effective in balancing appropriately supervision, privacy and child protection in accordance with detailed individual care plans and risk assessments. The staff team also work cooperatively with families, placing authorities and specialised services to provide holistic support for each young person. For example, when concerns are raised about young people's needs the home is able to receive support from a multiple professional team. The team provides a coordinated and therapeutic approach that helps the staff find new ways of keeping young people safe.

All significant events are notified appropriately in accordance with Regulation 30. As a result, young people are well protected. Risk assessments are in place for

countering bullying and the staff team are aware of the importance of maintaining vigilance in the interest of young people's welfare. Positive relationships and positive behaviour management is a high priority for the home and there is a warm atmosphere where success is encouraged. The use of restraint is seen as a last resort for managing behaviour with more emphasis placed on de-escalation and re-direction. If restraint does become necessary, staff have access to records to validate their action. The internal system is robust to ensure action taken by staff is conducted in the interests of young people's welfare. For example, restraint logs are internally scrutinised to ensure practice is transparent and conducted in accordance with procedures. There is a clear policy, guidance and risk assessments in place in case young people go missing. These reflect the vulnerability of individual young people and the immediate action required. Young people's physical safety is enhanced by robust safety checks in respect of fire prevention, water, gas and electrical safety. Risk assessments relating to the home's environment and young people's activities are effective. Vetting of staff and visitors to the home is thorough. This thoroughness helps protect young people from being exposed to unsuitable contacts.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Education is seen as an important aspect of a young person's development. The staff team encourage learning in consultation with the school attended by the young people. Each young person has both a clear individual educational plan and personal education plan that are collectively aimed at providing a 24 hour curriculum approach to secure continuity. For example, the home ensures the same communication systems used by the school are also used at home. The importance of routine for young people is equally seamless between the home and school. This helps to reduce anxieties and maintain consistency which is important to all young people supported by the home.

The staff assist young people in accessing extra curricular activities. This includes being able to use a computer and have access to art materials. Also, the staff recognise the importance of young people accessing leisure and recreational activities, not only in relation to their health, but also to encourage them to socialise with peers outside of the home. Families are kept informed about the welfare of their child and play a key role in advocating for them. This ensures young people have someone independent of the home overseeing their welfare. Young people receive individual support when they need it. This includes having key workers who help co-ordinate appointments and monitor their care plans. The home has established good networks with the community to help young people avoid becoming isolated and to support them to form friendships outside the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has a placement plan that gives a good overview of their needs. All documents that make up the placement plan are designed to be person centred and capture details relating to a young person's education, social and health needs. Nevertheless, although the placement plan carries a lot of information through the various assessments, reports and plans, there are occasional inconsistencies between documents that compromise the comprehensive aim of the overall plan. Diversity is integrated into day-to-day practice in a holistic way that adequately addresses issues of ethnicity, culture and identity. There are excellent links established with speech and language therapists to ensure augmented communication is developed for young people. This is utilised effectively by staff to ensure young people are contributing to decisions that directly affect them. In addition, staff recognise changes in young people's mood and body language as a way of identifying additional needs.

There are procedures in place for admissions and planning discharges which are sensitively managed to reflect individual needs of young people either moving in or moving on from the home. For example, planned discharges involve helping young people gain familiarity with new staff who will be supporting them in the future. The staff team also share their knowledge of the young person with the new services to help secure a smooth transition. This helps young people to have consistency of care, which is a key area of need.

The home plays a key role in helping young people sustain family contact. This is managed in a way that helps families to feel as supported as young people. Families receive a monthly report that helps them remain informed on the child's progress. More in-depth reports are completed for all statutory reviews and done in coordination with the school. This secures a holistic view on a young person's overall progress and achievements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home provides reasonable homely and comfortable accommodation. It is decorated, furnished and maintained to acceptable standard. There is a good level of space to enable young people to pursue hobbies, socialise or if they prefer, to have time on their own. However, due to changes being made to the layout of the home to improve the overall facilities, not all areas are fully functional. Some bedrooms and bathroom facilities are looking worn and are compromising the comfort of young people. Plans to improve these areas are in place with a clear timeline to ensure accommodation is improved.

Effective provision established within the home helps vulnerable young people to cope with transition and major life changes. These include the transition from childhood to adulthood. This extends to working closely with other agencies when

transition plans are in place. This helps young people to move on in a sensitive way in which their continuous needs can be met after leaving the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Regular staff meetings and supervision are seen as a key element of maintaining quality of care and safeguarding young people. This includes practices being evaluated in line with young people's needs. The staff team have access to a good range of internal and accredited courses which are also complimented by e-learning opportunities. Some of the key training includes first aid, care and control, care of medicines and safeguarding. The range of courses available helps the staff gain the required skills and knowledge they need to keep young people healthy and safe. Nevertheless, staffing levels have been affected by the number of staff leaving. This is compromising the staff being able to provide all required support for community access. To cover shifts, support from external staff is being required. This includes using agency staff and staff working excessive hours to sustain staff levels that meet the needs of young people. The staff rota is also not adequately structured to ensure handover time enables all staff to be well briefed and prepared for their shifts. These shortfalls are impacting on maintaining staff levels at sufficient numbers with the right levels of experience to meet the needs of young people. More positively, recruitment of new staff to address these shortfalls is well underway.

The management team monitor and sign appropriate records as part of their internal quality assurance. Regulation 33 visits take place at regular intervals to provide an additional quality assurance mechanism. The findings of these visits are reported to the manager and used to drive forward improvements in the quality of care for young people. There is good contribution coming from both the management and the organisation to be increasingly ambitious about improving the service in the interest of young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This stems from the staff ensuring they gain knowledge of each young person's diverse needs including their cultural heritage to help them understand more about their identity and specific needs of support. For example, the placement plan is particularly good at capturing young people's identity and diverse needs such as communication. Training opportunities also enable staff to learn more about areas of equality and diversity. This knowledge is then brought into their everyday practice to improve outcomes for young people.

Young people's individual case files are confidentially stored and are arranged in a manner that makes them useable by staff and yet accessible to the young person. On young people's admission, well presented booklets are provided to help them to have a clear understanding about the home, including what they can expect from staff. These are designed particularly with young people's communication needs in mind. There is maximum use of picture and symbols to ensure young people get to know about things such as their rights, including how to raise concerns. The Statement of Purpose describes the function and purpose of the home. However, it

does not fully detail staffing arrangements. For example, it is missing information about the arrangements for calling senior staff support if required.

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
30	ensure that there is at all times sufficient numbers of staff on duty to meet the needs of young people accommodated (Regulation 25(1)(2))	08/01/2011
16	make sure the complaints procedure is known by young people's parents (Regulation 24(2e))	08/01/2011
13	make sure there are suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping of any medicines received into the home. (Regulation 21(1))	08/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure the Statement of Purpose includes details about staffing including the arrangements for calling senior staff support if required (NMS 30(2))
- improve facilities in the home accessed by young people (NMS 24(1))
- make sure staff have scheduled time for handovers. (NMS 29(6))