

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanna Heller
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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 home accommodates six young people of either sex aged between 12 years and 18 years old. The home offers 24 hour care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities on the autistic spectrum.

The home is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a large city. The home has easy access to all local amenities including high street markets and good transport links. The home offers single bedroom accommodation with sufficient numbers of toilet and bathroom facilities for the young people.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection carried out as part of the annual inspection program. All key national minimum standards were assessed. The home received praise from young people, parents and placing authorities demonstrating excellent outcomes for young people in every area. Particular strengths are the way in which staff and management work with the young people, succeeding in engaging them in areas that would not previously have been considered possible. Young people are able to develop self esteem and confidence with the support of staff. The home has excellent relationships with placing authorities.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the home was asked to ensure that copies of reports of the visits carried out under regulation 33 are available on site. The home now has highly effective quality assurance systems in place including such reports.

The home over the past 12 months has continued to develop its practice in all areas securing grading improvements across the board to a level where the service may be considered a beacon.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home has excellent systems in place to secure healthy lifestyle opportunities encouraging young people to keep healthy. Young people, parents and placing authorities feel that young people's health needs are met. Young people benefit from a variety of nutritious home cooked foods which reflect people's choices and cultural heritage. Young people are encouraged to get involved in the household food shopping and enjoy preparing meals. Young people on independence skill programmes are expected to regularly budget, shop for and prepare their own meals. Young people say that they enjoy the food in the home and are encouraged to have a healthy diet.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted through local membership at the gym and activities such as swimming. Young people have access to appropriate health services such as doctors, dentists and opticians. Specialist health services are sought where required such as counselling, children's mental health teams and diabetic nurses. Young people living at the home are not always fully compliant with health advice given and the home addresses this through rewards to attend

appointments and through key working discussions. Information about drugs, relationships, alcohol and smoking is discussed during keyworking sessions flexibly according to the receptiveness of the young people.

The home has safe systems in place for the storage and administration of medication. Staff are trained in managing medication which is updated periodically. Clear records are held of medication coming into and leaving the home and of medication given. All staff are trained in first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home ensures young people are to the best of its ability kept safe. Young people, parents and placing authorities are very positive about how the home ensures excellent outcomes in this area. Young people are safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices. Before any staff begin working at the home appropriate checks on identity, employment history, and criminal records are undertaken. All prospective staff are interviewed and references provided are followed up by telephone. Records of staff and young people are held securely and clear confidentiality processes are in place.

The building is well maintained and regular checks are carried out to ensure its remains safe. Any maintenance issues are swiftly addressed. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice. All bathrooms and bedrooms are lockable ensuring privacy.

All staff receive training in child protection and safeguarding young people which is regularly updated. Staff are clear on their responsibilities and the process to follow should any disclosure of a safeguarding nature take place. Young people say that they feel safe and secure living at the home and that staff care about them. Young people who go missing are notified to the appropriate agencies in line with local guidelines. Young people are encouraged to keep the home informed of their whereabouts and say that staff ring them on their mobile phone to remind them that its time to come home. Young people say that staff reinforce that they have to notify them as missing and have these routines in place because they are trying to keep them safe and that they care. Significant incidents are reported to the appropriate agencies.

Discussions take place with young people on issues such as knife crime, appropriate dress and how they can best keep themselves safe. Risk assessments are in place for young people which identify their vulnerability and any risks they may pose to others. Activity based risk assessments are also in place. Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff whom they describe as 'good people' who they feel they are able to talk to if anything is worrying them. Relationships between young people and staff underpin the clear behavioural management strategies in place. Sanctions applied are considered to be fair and just and incidents of restraints very rare. Any sanctions or incidents of restraint are clearly recorded and discussed with the young people. Placing authorities say 'Their ability to managing difficult situations with two young people while triaging their needs is where they show great strength. In particular following arguments/rows the staff are able to debrief with young people with what appears to be Cognitive Behavioural Therapy technique to empower the young people'.

Young people have confidence in the complaints process and feel that they are effectively listened to. Bullying is not considered to be an issue of concern as staff are proactive in recognising and responding to any situations swiftly and effectively.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The home demonstrates a deep commitment to education and positively promotes this as young people's best chance to secure a better future for themselves. Young people, parents and placing authorities believe this to be a key strength of the unit. Reward systems linked to education are in place and young people have succeeded in earning new items such as a flat screen TV and computer through engaging in education. Staff support young people in securing appropriate educational placements and ensuring regular attendance. Support is offered for homework and staff actively seek out work experience/studying opportunities for the young people who are given a training allowance for attending. Young people living at the home have in many instances not previously engaged in education. The home has successfully turned this around enabling young people to gain recognition for their achievements such as awards for most significantly improved student.

The support to young people is child centred and highly individualistic. Young people have individual care plans which identify their strengths and support needs. Where young people have specific requirements due to disability or cultural backgrounds these are detailed and support put in place to meet them. The staff team is diverse and reflects the cultural backgrounds of the young people ensuring the provision of positive role models of both genders. Staff support young people in coming to terms with their past and securing positive new memories through a variety of opportunity and life story work. Young people are encouraged and supported to take part in activities which will help build their confidence and self esteem such as the tall ships challenge.

Young people are able to enjoy a variety of leisure opportunities and pursue individual interests. Young people benefit from one to one activity time each week with their keyworker. These regularly enjoyed activities include swimming, graffiti park, laser quest, ice skating, cinema, shopping, fishing, gardening and going to the park. Planned group activities have included go karting and trips to Thorpe Park, Madam Tussauds, London Zoo and the London Eye. A midweek break was enjoyed by the young people earlier in the year with another planned to take place next week.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are assessed before a place at the home is offered, ensuring that their needs are able to be met. From the core assessment an individual plan of care is developed. This care plan is kept under review and is regularly updated through the statutory and internal reviewing processes.

Admissions to the home are generally planned and a process of admission is in place which is geared to help young people settle in. Young people are welcome to visit the home prior to admission and have an opportunity to meet other young people and staff. A welcome pack including key information and items such as a toothbrush, toy and note pad, as appropriate to the age of the young person, is provided. When young people leave the home this is a celebrated

process with a party and leaving present. Young people move on into independent living accommodation or are successfully reunited with their families. Few placement breakdowns are experienced.

Young people feel well consulted about their care and the day to day running of the home. Each young person has an allocated keyworker. Young people say they are able to talk to staff about any issues. Young people are encouraged to take an active role in their statutory reviews and the weekly house meetings.

The home effectively supports young people's contact with families and friends. Staff are aware of any issues relating to contact such as any prohibited contacts. Families are able to visit the young people at the home and parents say that they are always made welcome. Where young people have had difficulties in maintaining contact with family, the home has at expense to itself, arranged for trained contact staff to supervise contact on site.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The home has excellent systems in place to support young people in developing skills for independent living and moving into adulthood. Young people are supported to develop skills through moving through three levels of work book skills assessments. Independence plans are in place for young people of 15 years and above. Where young people are reluctant to engage the approach has been adapted to be more flexible. All young people are being encouraged to develop budgeting, cooking, laundry and shopping skills. Young people say 'I love the way staff treat me. I like helping staff cook and shop'. Staff have secured work experience placements relevant to the young people's interests and the home pays a training allowance to those who take up this opportunity. The organisation is also in the process of arranging formal training in areas such as food hygiene, health and safety, CV writing and interviewing skills.

Young people are provided with suitable allowances and are encouraged to save these up to enable larger purchases to be made. Bank accounts are opened and money is placed into this account by the home each week.

The building is well decorated and maintained, and meets the needs of the young people. Individual bedrooms are provided which are able to be decorated and personalised according to the young people's wishes. Sufficient toilet and bathrooms are provided. Furniture and fittings are domestic in style and serve to make the house feel homely and comfortable. The home is situated close to the busy town centre and is supplied with good transport links into and around the city.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The home has reviewed its service and developed an action plan on how areas can be improved and is putting this into action. The home ensures that young people's individual needs are assessed and met. The staff team is diverse and is able to offer positive role models for the young people. All staff have received training in valuing diversity. Staff work with young people to sensitively challenge the entrenched discriminatory attitudes they may hold.

This is a well run home which works exceptionally well with placing authorities to ensure that they are kept up to date on all issues relating to the young people. Parents feel that they are kept well informed by the home. Young people say that they feel well cared for and enjoy living at the home. Staff feel well supported and say that the management is very supportive of them in both their professional and personal lives.

Young people, placing authorities and parents are guided to services the home is able to offer through the statement of purpose and young people's guide. The young people's guide is given to all young people as part of the welcome to the home pack and is available on CD Rom.

Management and staffing arrangements within the home are clear. Senior managers are on call and provide practical hands on support at any time of crisis day or night. Staffing levels are suitable and are arranged flexibly to meet the needs of the young people.

Staff benefit from regular professional supervision which explores their practice, organisational issues and training needs. Staff are kept up to date through regular team meetings where young people's needs are explored and practice is reflected on. Management operate an open door policy for staff and young people and give clear guidance to staff of their expectations of them. Staff enjoy team building days and feel this helps them work closely together to secure good outcomes for the young people. New staff are offered a detailed induction and shadowing process, however, the records held of induction fail to fully evidence this.

The organisation demonstrates a strong commitment to training staff. All staff who have been working at the home for more than a few weeks have either completed NVQ level 3 caring for children and young people or are enrolled on the course. Other staff have equivalent or higher qualifications. All staff undertake training in core areas such as safeguarding, behaviour management, autism awareness, fire, health and safety and first aid. Staff have in addition undertaken a wide variety of relevant training and are able to secure funding for any training relevant to the roles they perform.

Staff are competent and are aware of the needs of young people. Young people say they feel that staff genuinely care for them. 'I love the way staff treat me. There is nothing I can think of that they could do better.' Parents say 'I was worried as you hear bad things about children's homes but this has given me confidence'. Placing authorities say 'I would like to see their style of child care shared with other facilities which are not able to produce the level of consistency in positive child care'. 'I am very pleased with the service we receive from this home. I have seen the way each of the young people we have placed have developed and been able to recognise the consequences of their actions and become more responsible citizens. I cannot think of anything they could do to improve the service'. 'I have watched the service grow over the years and am aware of the many difficult placements that they have been able to positively effect and turn around.' 'I have always found staff and management very approachable and helpful when a placement is needed. I would have no hesitation when recommending Horizon to another Local Authority'.

The organisation has in place good systems for reviewing the quality of service which involves feedback from young people and placing authorities.

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 records of induction fully evidence the induction processes which take place (NMS 28)