

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley
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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 setting offers care and accommodation for up to five children and young people aged from 11 years who display emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children and young people are normally placed at the home for medium to long term periods, though emergency and short term placements are also provided.

The home offers accommodation over two floors with considerable space both inside and out. The home is situated outside of a town centre though there are local amenities and good transport links.

Summary

This key inspection was unannounced taking place on a weekday. Young people receive a suitable diet and are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and lead a healthy lifestyle. The health care needs of young people are met appropriately with particular emphasis on addressing their emotional well-being. Young people are protected from the risk of harm as best as possible, with appropriate safeguarding training provided to staff. The negative and challenging behaviours of young people are fully considered, assessed and planned for within a responsive, rather than reactive, ethos. The individual needs of young people are addressed in an excellent fashion with extremely comprehensive care planning and review procedures in place. Young people are assisted very well to contribute their views and opinions. Young people benefit from living in an environment which is homely and relaxed and which offers them outstanding accommodation. The home is managed very well with staff being suitably guided and supported to carry out their tasks. The provider has taken considerable steps to ensure the service is able to continue to provide a good standard of care.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection. Records of any child protection matters or referrals are now kept accurately and appropriately. Looked After Child documentation which confirms the consent of the placing authority is now signed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are assisted and encouraged to eat a healthy diet and to participate in physical activities. Each young person has their likes and dislikes in regard meals taken into consideration when menus are planned. The menu is completed in conjunction with young people and was seen to offer an appropriately balanced diet with fresh produce used wherever possible. Young people have the amount of snack foods they eat monitored with alternatives such as sugar free snacks and non-caffeine drinks available.

Since the last inspection an excellent format has been introduced for health care planning. Each health care plan identifies all aspects of each young person's physical, medical and emotional care needs and how these should be met by staff. Wherever possible young people themselves contribute to the final plan, being assisted to complete their own health care questionnaires.

Health care plans clearly highlight the dates when medical appointments such as the dentist and optician are due and when they have been kept with all young people registered at nearby GP surgeries. Consent for the giving of first aid, medicines and emergency treatment are kept on file.

The emotional needs of young people are met particularly well. Since the last inspection the organisation have employed the services of a consultant child psychologist who can offer expert guidance, assessments and individualised programmes to address the specific needs of young people. This can include therapy and counselling to focus on particular issues including bereavement and attachment. Such specialised input is in addition to a holistic approach which ensures young people receive sensitive and knowledgeable support and care. Close liaison with external agencies such as the Looked After Children (LAC) nurse and the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) ensure young people benefit from a joined up and cohesive approach.

All medication is stored securely in a suitable cabinet within the staff office; no home remedies are kept at the home. Only staff who have passed a medicines capabilities programme are able to administer medication with one member of senior staff taking on the responsibility each shift. A robust procedure ensures the administration of medicines is generally accurate and up-to-date. Stock checks occur regularly with medicines stored being accurate with records. Two members of staff sign both the stock record and the young persons administration sheet when controlled medicines are given; one of the most recent entries in the stock book only contained a single staff signature.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

All confidential information relating to young people is stored securely in the office. Young people clearly have their privacy respected and have keys to their own rooms. A clear and obvious protocol is in place in regards to room searches.

Young people are given clear details of how to make a complaint should they wish. Information is further contained in the young persons guide, whilst details are displayed in communal areas around the home including the contact details of independent advocacy services. One anonymous complaint was received by Ofsted since the last inspection which subsequently led to an investigation. As a result a number of actions were made. The organisation engaged and cooperated fully throughout the process.

A robust approach toward child protection ensures that young people are as safe as they can be. Staff receive appropriate induction and training in key safeguarding matters with sound policies and procedures in place. Staff display a good understanding of child protection issues with the acting manager having recent experience of working directly in the child protection arena. The organisation have a comprehensive recruitment process with no members of staff working with young people until all the necessary checks and references have been confirmed. One staff file viewed did not contain photographic identification.

Young people have their challenging and risky behaviours assessed, planned for and reviewed. Comprehensive behaviour management plans and risk assessments are compiled which highlight all possible concerns. Each young person has their particular issues identified during the admission process with behaviours including violence, self-harm, absconding or bullying being

incorporated into specific plans. Such plans clearly guide staff in how to respond to each young person and thus provide a consistent approach. Young people agree behaviour contracts and an incentive programme which is developed with them with a view to individualising the rewards to matters which are relevant.

Young people who show signs of bullying or intimidating behaviour have any incidents addressed swiftly. The setting have a zero tolerance approach to bullying and have liaised closely with the local police to provide information to young people in regards to the potential criminal consequences of such behaviour.

The setting have a robust process in place to address situations when young people leave the home without permission. An excellent risk assessment provides staff with all necessary information relating to the young person in question including their vulnerability and risks. The level of absconding behaviour is low.

The culture within the home is based around a responsive rather than reactive approach. Wherever possible staff engage young people in discussion and give them alternatives to behaving negatively, such as allowing them space. All staff are trained in the use of physical restraint although a clear focus on de-escalation considerably reduces the need for such intervention. The number of restraints taking place are currently very low.

The health and safety of young people and staff alike is taken seriously. All electrical, gas and fire fighting equipment is routinely serviced and tested. The regular testing of emergency lighting and fire alarms occurs along with fire drills; no recent fire drills have taken place with young people present. The home environment was found to be very well maintained with no obvious health and safety issues seen.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their individual needs met in an excellent fashion. Consistently high levels of support is provided with key working playing a fundamental role of the service. Young people clearly engage in the process with staff providing them with care, support and guidance to match their individual circumstances. Staff clearly understand the particular needs of young people extremely well benefiting from the one to one support offered by their key workers. Regular one to one sessions ensure young people have every opportunity to address their own behaviours, feelings and thoughts in a sensitive manner. Additional expert advice and guidance is provided by a child psychologist, culminating in a holistic care approach.

Staff display considerable understanding of each young person's physical, medical and social care needs with a notable focus on their emotional well being. Young people are encouraged to participate in development of their individual care plans and sign to agree to the boundaries and expectations of behaviour relevant to them. Routine child focus meetings review the individual progress of each young person with comprehensive care planning responding to changing needs and circumstance.

A positive learning culture encourages young people to engage in their education. Each young person has a personal education plan that clearly defines the type of programme they should be receiving. Close liaison with local education authorities ensures that the correct type of provision is sought for each individual young person. Despite the inspection taking place in

the summer holidays pro-active actions have been taken to link with educational providers to ensure all young people have education programmes in place for September.

Young people benefit from living in a home where activities occur routinely. Staff display a high level of motivation and enthusiasm which in turn encourages young people to participate in the things they enjoy or are interested in. Regular visits take place to local places of interest, the cinema and leisure centres to participate in sport. Wherever possible the individual interests of young people are supported and facilitated. All young people have an activities plan in place for the summer holidays which was seen to offer excellent variety and choice. Most recently the whole young person group went on holiday with staff to a leisure park staying away from the home for a week. The excursion was clearly enjoyed by all who went and was a valuable and positive experience.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Wherever possible all placements are planned in advance, although robust assessment protocols and procedures ensure young people can be accommodated at short notice. Young people are only admitted into the home once a full and comprehensive assessment of their care needs has been completed.

Rigorous assessments are made on all relevant and available information regarding the physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of the individual young person. Such assessments are incorporated into plans of care which highlight the individual needs of every young person in line with LAC placement planning. Care plans clearly guide staff in meeting the individual needs of each young person. The organisation utilise the services of a child psychologist to provide expert advice and specific intervention programmes such as therapy and counselling.

Since the last inspection a new format for care planning has been introduced by the acting manager. The new care plan provides an excellent and comprehensive assessment and planning framework which covers every aspect of care provision. Care plans are completed under the Every Child Matters descriptors and clearly show what the individual needs of young people are and how they should be met and reviewed. Young people help to complete some of the sections once they are in placement and are encouraged to agree and sign them.

Regular reviews of care ensure each care plan matches the current needs of each young person in an individualised fashion. The whole staff team contribute to routine child focus meetings where any change to each young persons circumstance, behaviour or emotional well being are considered fully. Excellent reviews of care focus on the progress of the respective young person against their care plan, these being completed under the every child matters descriptors. Similar reports are provided for statutory LAC reviews with young people being supported to attend and participate.

The particulars of any agreed contact arrangements are recorded in detail being clearly known by staff and the young person concerned. Where relevant staff facilitate contact arrangements and go out of their way to ensure meetings occur. Risk assessments are completed for such visits and updated when and if necessary. Excellent records are kept of every contact which provides a clear picture of the circumstance of visits and their outcome.

Young people are given every possible opportunity to express their views and to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. House meetings take place weekly with staff facilitating a more formal way of involving young people in the issues of the home. House meetings form a routine aspect of living at the home with staff ensuring they take place even if just one young person is placed there. The atmosphere within the setting is open and relaxed with young people clearly feeling comfortable to say what they feel to staff in an informal manner. Clear details of advocacy services are displayed around the home should young people choose to contact more independent agencies.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Sound procedures are in place to support young people as they approach adulthood. The newly updated care planning process incorporates a section for initial pathway information irrespective of the young persons age on admission. This means staff are fully aware of the need to consider any life skills work or the necessity to liaise with placing authorities if a young person is due to leave care at any point in the near future. Such a robust approach also ensures young people are given every opportunity to engage in the process as early as possible and to contribute to any proposed plans.

Young people are encouraged to take age appropriate responsibilities. Wherever possible staff assist young people to gain self-esteem and confidence by allowing them opportunities to make decisions for themselves and having periods of time in the local community. Staff ensure any plans to encourage young people to shop for themselves, cook or budget is considered alongside their own abilities and comprehension.

Young people live in an environment which offers excellent standards of accommodation. The size of the home allows young people considerable space with good sized bedrooms and spacious communal areas. Each young person is afforded the opportunity to personalise their own rooms with posters and pictures, whilst they can choose the colour of the décor should they wish. The home has two lounges, one being a more young persons room with a computer console and large TV and sofas, whilst the main lounge offers comfortable furnishings and more space. The kitchen is very large being equipped with modern preparation, storage and cooking facilities. The kitchen is large enough to house the dining table with meals being taken in a very pleasant environment. The premises are further enhanced with pictures which contributes to an overall homely and relaxed feel. A large garden provides young people with a very nice outdoor space with a trampoline, outdoor table tennis and additional lawn and patio area. All areas of the home were found to be in an extremely good condition both inside and out.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A sufficient amount of information is made available which outlines the aims and objectives of the setting and the services it offers. The new management and staffing structure is clearly detailed with all other information being up-to-date. Young people receive their own guide along with parents and carers.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. In particular young people are given every opportunity to contribute to meal planning with their likes and dislikes being considered when the menus are compiled. One meal per week is devoted to young persons choice and often

involves experiencing culturally different meals such as Indian and Chinese. The individual needs of young people play a crucial role in all aspects of care, this includes allowing them the opportunity to question the negative or inappropriate behaviours of their peers. Care plans highlight specific needs and issues with young people receiving specialised input for personal issues such as bereavement. Young people are actively encouraged to contribute their views and opinions with house meetings taking place even if just one young person is living at the home. As young people approach adulthood they are supported and encouraged to take on age appropriate responsibilities, whilst their vulnerability and comprehension is carefully considered to ensure a balanced staff response. The management approach of the home clearly places the individual needs of young people in high regard with regular team meetings focusing on each young person to assess whether their particular needs and wishes are being met.

As previously noted in staying safe, since the last inspection one complaint was received at Ofsted concerning some aspects of management and the overall running of the service. This led to an investigation being carried out by Ofsted and subsequently a number of actions being made; all actions were addressed in good time. During this period the provider took the decision to employ a new manager and reorganise the staffing team and indeed employ a number of new members of care staff. The provider also engaged the services of a consultant, with a clear willingness to introduce consistent and high standards of care provision. The manner in which the provider acknowledged the situation and set about addressing it was professional and timely.

Since the last inspection the registered manager has resigned and left the organisation. A new acting manager has been appointed along with a virtually new full-time staff team. The acting manager is a qualified Social Worker with considerable experience of working with children and young people within the LAC system. The acting manager clearly displays a sound understanding of all matters affecting care provision within the home. The acting manager carries out the routine monitoring of care practices and is fully aware of the needs of young people living at the setting and of the care staff entrusted to care for them. An application to register the acting manager with Ofsted is currently being processed.

An appropriate number of staff are deployed during the day and night to care for the young people currently living at the home. Many of the staff team have been employed since the last inspection consisting of a good balance of new and experienced staff. The whole staff team were able to benefit from an induction and training programme instigated whilst there were no young people placed at the home. The training and induction programme provided staff with a focused course which addressed all necessary areas. Staff receive regular supervision and commented positively on the manner that they are supported and guided by the acting manager and their deputy. Staff morale appears to be good with staff exhibiting energy and enthusiasm to carryout their tasks and develop their practice.

Aside from the acting manager's monitoring process of care provision the organisation ensure the monthly Regulation 33 inspections are completed. Such inspection visits are carried out by a consultant and provide a clear and objective review of the standard of care. Where issues are identified a timescale of action is recorded with any matters being actively reviewed at the next inspection. A compliments and comments book is kept of feedback received from care professionals and other interested parties, such as social workers, teachers and young people themselves. This book is a very useful quality assurance format being used to inform practice and team learning.

Since the last inspection the provider and director of the organisation have engaged in a training programme aimed at consolidating their knowledge and understanding of residential care management.

Records seen during the inspection clearly evidence the progress and development of each young person placed at the setting.

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 two members of staff sign the relevant medication administration record when controlled medicines are given (NMS 13.2)
- ensure all staff recruitment files contain picture identification (NMS 27.1)
- ensure fire drills take place which involve young people (NMS 26.8)