

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Christopher Garrett
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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

This is a home for up to seven young people, aged between 5 and 15 on admission. An older admission age applies to the two young people who are accommodated in the semi-independence unit. This service is accredited as a registered therapeutic community. Most of the young people have therapeutic input from external therapists and the aim is to achieve permanency within a family setting. The young people usually remain at the home for up to two years before they move on. The home is a very well maintained and modernised detached 17th century building situated on a busy main road a few miles from a major town centre.

Summary

The purpose of this visit was to conduct an unannounced key inspection of the home. During the inspection all of the key national minimum standards for children's homes were inspected.

The overall standard of care for the children and young people at the home is outstanding. There is ample evidence that the home continues to provide exceptional standards of care for the young people. The home fully engages with the inspection process and uses this along with its own excellent quality assurance systems to reflect and improve on the care and practises within the home. There are robust systems and practice in place which ensure that the young people are cared for safely and their individual needs are met. The young people state that they feel safe in the home. Young people say that the staff care and listen to them and are good at making them feel better if they are upset.

At the time of the inspection there were three young people living in the home. They all engaged with the inspection process.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home was recommended that it clarify its night time security procedures. Steps have been taken to ensure that there is a waking night member of staff on duty each night. Security to windows has been improved. Security checks take place each night. These arrangements ensure that the young people live in a home that is safe and secure.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of the young people's health and the arrangements for their medical needs are well organised and fully established within the home. Young people are supported to understand and make healthy choices regarding their diets and to engage in a range of physical activities.

The young people's food choices and preferences are taken into account in the home's menu planning. Menus offer a good variety and are adventurous. Themed evenings offer the opportunities for the young people to experience food from different cultures. The young people have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet. One of the young people said, 'staff help us to eat healthily by encouraging us to eat vegetables and fruit.' Snacking and eating of sweets is carefully monitored. Meals in the home are prepared and cooked by

the care team. The young people develop cooking skills by helping in the preparation of meals. The semi independence unit allows the young people to extend their cooking skills and take on greater responsibility for budgeting, planning and preparing their own meals.

The young people are encouraged and supported in taking an interest in their personal health and in developing a healthy lifestyle. The young people's physical and emotional health needs are fully assessed and monitored. Details of the actions to be taken to meet these are clearly recorded in the young people's care and therapeutic plans. Robust and established procedures are in place, which ensure that the young people have access to local and specialist services. These include regular sessions with a play therapist. All appointments are routinely attended which ensures attention to any emerging or on going health or emotional needs. The young people are encouraged and supported to participate in a range of physical activities.

The young people's health needs are protected by highly effective procedures and practice. Most of the home's residential therapeutic care workers are trained in the delivery of first aid and the safe administration of medications. These arrangements ensure that the young people have access to suitably trained staff at all times. The arrangements for the storage, administration, dispensing and recording of medication are robust and contribute to the safeguarding of the young people

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Safeguarding is a clear priority in the home. The staff have developed and established practices and procedures within the home. These ensure that the young people live in a safe, secure, caring and nurturing environment.

The young people's privacy is fully respected. Staff are deployed in a manner which ensures high levels of supervision without this being seen as intrusive. Young people comment positively about the supervision they receive at sensitive times such as when they are bathing, showering and getting dressed. The young people say 'staff knock on our bedroom doors before they come in' and 'staff supervise bath times by sitting outside on the landing so that they are there if we need them'.

Staff are fully aware of any contact restrictions that are in place. This ensures that the young people do not have direct and or unsupervised contact with anybody identified as posing a risk to them. The young people have access to a cordless phone which they can use (subject to any agreed restrictions) to make and receive telephone calls in private.

The young people are fully aware of how they can raise concerns and make formal complaints. However, they all express their confidence in being able to take issues directly to the adults and that any matters they raise are listened to and acted upon. There are established systems in place to process formal complaints made by the young people, social workers, external agencies and members of the local community. These are rarely used and there have been no recent complaints received from outside the home. Issues that have been previously made have been dealt with effectively and outcomes of any action taken relayed to the complainant.

The young people are protected from abuse. Staff receive regular training on recognising the signs and symptoms of abuse and how they should respond to these. The care staff demonstrate that they are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities with regards to child protection

issues. Staff clearly understand the procedures they must take if they have a suspicion, or receives a disclosure or allegation, that abuse has or is taking place. The company has a senior member of staff who acts as a child protection designated person and takes the lead responsibility for dealing with child protection. This arrangement helps provide consistency in the management of child protection issues.

Staff are fully aware of the vulnerability of the young people living in the home. The home takes positive steps to protect the young people from bullying. Staff are proactive in raising the young people's awareness of bullying. Staff also encourage and support young people to reflect on the impact that bullying behaviour has on others. The young people explain that staff respond positively to incidents of bullying by talking to the young people and trying to resolve things between them.

Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities and the processes that need to be taken if a young person is absent from the home without permission. However, no recent incidents have taken place.

The effective management of behaviour is a significant aspect of the excellent practice within the home. The young people have a clear understanding of the behaviour that is expected from them. Staff encourage the young people to develop acceptable behaviour and there is a constructive response to when this is unacceptable or unwanted. Positive handling plans ensure that there is a consistent management of the young people's behaviour. Staff undertake regular training in the use of de-escalation skills and physical intervention and use this effectively. Records show that the use of physical intervention is very much a last resort and that it is not frequently used with most of the young people. The young people said, 'staff only hold you if you are going to hurt someone or hurt yourself'.

The young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. Positive steps are taken to keep the young people, staff and visitors safe from the risk of fire and other hazards. Established systems are in place for the regular checking and servicing of fire safety and detection equipment. The young people and staff are briefed on the home's emergency fire procedures and regularly participate in practice evacuations. The home ensures that all of its care staff complete fire awareness training. A fire risk assessment is in place. However it is unclear whether this fully covers the wider scope the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

There are fully established systems for implementing, reviewing and updating a full range of risk assessments that include the premises and activities taking place on and off site. This helps to ensure the safety of the young people. The physical environment is well maintained and no significant, actual or potential health and safety hazards were identified during the tour of the premises or grounds.

The home has an established system in place for the recruitment and vetting of staff. Recruitment procedures mostly meet the requirements of the national minimum standards. The failure to request the precise details regarding applicants previous periods of employment makes it difficult to determine if there are any gaps in their employment history. References are routinely sought and verified.

The organisation has recently experienced delays in getting Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks processed and has sought guidance from the Criminal Records Bureau and other agencies regarding the portability of existing checks. Records show that the home has adhered to most of the recommendations made regarding the portability Criminal Records Bureau checks. Risk assessments are in place to ensure that staff employed under these recommendations, do not have unsupervised access to the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent individual support that meets their specific needs. Individual care and therapeutic plans identify the individual support needed and details how these are being met. Individual support is sought from services within the organisation and from a range of external agencies. The young people are allocated regular sessions with a play therapist whose services are delivered on site.

The young people have a key worker who takes a lead responsibility in the management and monitoring of their files. Staff take an equal responsibility for the care and welfare of the young people. Staff build good relationships with the young people and have a good understanding of their needs. Young people have regular and direct work sessions with members of the care team. These sessions provide a safe space for them to discuss personal issues and to address the objectives listed in the young people's care and therapeutic plans.

Staff are proactive in promoting the value of education. The staff work hard to identify suitable educational provisions for the young people. All of the young people are registered with a school. Staff maintain regular contact with the young people's teachers and attend meetings arranged by the school. Staff act as advocates if the young people are in difficulties at school. Staff also provide both practical and emotional support to help young people maintain their attendance.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are fully aware of the importance for the young people to be able to maintain positive contact with families and significant others. Staff are fully informed about any adults who may pose a risk to a young person. Staff are involved in the organisation of face-to-face contact and provide practical and emotional support at these times. Subject to any agreed restrictions, the young people are able to receive and/or make phone calls. The home has comfortable space for the young people to meet with visitors in private. These arrangements ensure that the young people maintain links with people outside of the home that are important to them.

Admissions to the home or the semi independence unit may be planned or take place following an emergency. Planned admissions are dealt with sensitively and involve an introductory visit. Young people are supported on admission and are given a copy of the children's guide. The home arranges for young people leaving the home to have a leaving celebration with their peers and any staff who have worked with them. A young person described this as being a very special occasion and an opportunity to say goodbye to everyone.

The routine consultation with young people on aspects of the day-to-day running of the home, and in key decisions that affect their daily life and future is fully integrated part of the

organisation of the home. The young people have a number of forums that they can use to express their view or opinions. The young people state that they are listened to and are able to affect changes. The young people are routinely consulted on a range of issues including activities, the menu and the decoration of their rooms. They are involved in meeting with adults applying to work in the home. The young people are routinely invited to attend their statutory reviews and be involved in key discussions and decision making about the future.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Currently none of the young people living at the home have reached the age requiring a pathway plan to be put in place. Young people living in the home are encouraged to develop basic independence and self-help skills. This provides a good baseline for those moving into the semi independence unit. Here, young people have the opportunity to improve and add to the skills in preparation for leaving care and moving onto independent living.

The young people live in a comfortable home, which meets their needs very well. The home is furnished to a high standard and is well maintained internally and externally. The young people have individual bedrooms which they personalise using soft furnishings, posters, photos and personal belongings. Two comfortable communal areas provide good spaces that are used for a variety of activities. Communal areas are nicely decorated using photos of the young people on activities, trips and with pieces of their craft work. A galley style dining area provides a good space for all of the staff and young people to come together. The young people take an interest in their environment and there are no signs of malicious damage.

The home is set back from the road by a small front garden. To the rear is a large terraced garden which consists of a lawned area with a patio.

The semi independence unit is set up to comfortably accommodate two young people. The unit is self contained and is separate from the other house and has its own entrances and garden.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home is managed and organised in a manner that delivers and maintains excellent standards of care so that the young people can progress and achieve while at the home. The home is without a Registered Manager. An application is being processed. Interim arrangements for the management of the home are robust and ensure that the young people's ongoing care and development are not affected. The acting manager and other senior staff provide good effective leadership and support to the care staff.

The home's Statement of Purpose and children's guide are produced in a way which ensures that the young people, their families, staff and significant others can fully understand how the home is organised. These documents determine what the home sets out to do for the young people it accommodates.

Residential therapeutic care workers are supported in developing the knowledge, skills and competences required to work with young people who have complex emotional and behavioural needs and require therapeutic input and support. Staff engage in a comprehensive development programme. This consists of an induction programme and statutory and service specific training.

Care staff speak positively about the training that they receive and say that it helps them to understand, develop and maintain their roles and ensures that they are able to continue to meet the needs of the young people.

Staffing levels are sufficient to meet the individual and group needs of the young people. Staff are deployed in a manner that provides consistency and continuity in the care and management of the young people. In response to requests made by the young people, the home has reduced its use of agency staff. Absences are covered by members of the care team, bank staff or from within the company. The young people say that availability and approachability of staff is a significant factor in making them feel safe in the home.

There are exceptionally well developed quality monitoring and quality assessment systems within the home. These centre around the experience of the young people and whether they receive the care and support that they need. The young people, staff and other stakeholders are fully involved in the quality assurance process. Their views are routinely sought and included in action plans that improve the quality of care and service within the home. The quality assurance programme encourages reflective and evaluative practice.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The young people are valued and respected as individuals. They are encouraged to develop their own identity and to pursue their own interests. The young people are all given the same opportunities regardless of age or ability. They are encouraged to make personal choices and there is no assumption that any are incapable of doing this. The opinions and views of the young people are routinely sought and listened to. Themed evenings provide an opportunity to raise young people's awareness of different cultures and beliefs. The young people are supported to follow their religious beliefs. Documents demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities and avoidance of inappropriate discrimination in all forms. Staff provide good role models. Staff have undertaken training in equal opportunities.

The young people have two main files which contain a range of comprehensive information. The files are very well organised and routinely updated. The arrangement for the storage and security of the files are good and ensures that personal information about the young people is kept safe and confidential.

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 Children's 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):

- review the home's fire risk assessment to ensure its compliance with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 (NMS.26)

- ensure that the home has precise details of an applicant's employment history and record all checks undertaken when accepting portability of existing Criminal Records Bureau checks. (NMS.27)