

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 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 setting offers care and accommodation for up to six children and young people aged from eight to 17 years who display emotional and behavioural difficulties. Children and young people are normally placed at the home for medium to long-term periods, although emergency and short-term placements are also provided.

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

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This key inspection was unannounced taking place on a weekday. One recommendation was made at this inspection. The overall judgement is outstanding. Young people are involved in developing menus with encouragement and guidance to eat healthily. The health care needs of young people are known and planned for. Young people receive excellent support to address their emotional well-being and behavioural issues. Staff work very hard to encourage young people to live as safely as possible. The negative or challenging behaviours of young people are fully considered and assessed. Young people receive outstanding individual care. Comprehensive care planning and review procedures take account of the specific needs of each young person and are holistic in nature. Young people are assisted to contribute their views and opinions. Young people live in a high standard of accommodation which is spacious and homely. The setting continues to be managed very well with staff being suitably guided and supported to carry out their tasks. The approach taken by the organisation is one of seeking to improve and consolidate high standards of care practice with the needs of young people placed first.

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection. One related to the need to ensure medicine stock keeping is accurate. All medication administration, storage and stock control systems are now robust and accurate.

The second recommendation noted that staff records should contain picture identification. Staff records now contain photographic identification for all persons working in the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy and balanced diet and to contribute to their own meal planning. Care plans clearly describe the types of food each young person likes or dislikes. Young people who are engaged in pathway plans are assisted to plan, budget, prepare and cook their own meals. Excellent records are kept which confirm each young person's weekly food and fluid intake.

The health care needs of each young person are fully assessed and considered. Each young person has a health care plan that highlights their physical, medical and emotional care needs. Health care plans include immunisation histories, previous and current medical matters and how these need to be met. All young people are registered with local doctors and dentists and are encouraged to attend routine appointments such as the required looked after children medicals. Staff promote healthy lifestyles including appropriate sexual health, personal care and physical well-being. Where specialist advice, guidance and intervention is needed health care professionals are sought and engaged.

Young people have their emotional needs met to an outstanding level. All care plans place considerable emphasis on addressing emotional well-being including issues such as mental health or learning difficulties. Regular liaison is maintained with other health care professionals to ensure a 'joined-up' approach is in place. The organisations clinical psychologist plays a lead role in ensuring a holistic and therapeutic approach to each placement plan. It is clear that staff hold the ideas of emotional well-being as being paramount in meeting the individual care needs of young people. The atmosphere within the setting is inclusive with young people consistently encouraged to consider how their comments, attitudes and behaviours may affect others.

The storage and administration of medicines is good with young people having their medication stored and given to them safely. Consents for the giving of medication, first aid and emergency treatment are in place with staff receiving up-to-date training. Excellent procedures ensure all medicines are given and recorded as intended.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their privacy respected fully, while information concerning them is stored securely in the office. Staff were observed to knock on bedroom doors before entering and did not discuss particular young person issues outside of the office. Young people keep their own room keys and are encouraged to respect each others privacy.

A robust complaints procedure is in place which is made known to young people as

soon as they arrive both verbally and within the young person's guide. Details of how young people can complain are displayed openly around the home with information relating to independent advocacy services readily available. Young people felt they could express their views easily and talk to staff whenever they needed to. No complaints have been made since the last inspection and none have been received by Ofsted.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure young people are kept as safe as possible from the risks of harm, neglect or abuse. All staff undertake child protection training and attend refresher courses. Staff displayed a sound and knowledgeable understanding of key child protection matters. Comprehensive assessments ensure the behaviours of each young person are considered and planned for including their vulnerability.

The approach toward behaviour management is outstanding. Young people have their challenging, negative or risky behaviours assessed as part of a comprehensive care planning process. All young people have competency safety assessments completed by the clinical psychologist which assesses their abilities in keeping themselves safe. Additional risk assessments are constructed utilising all available information coupled with expert advice and strategy planning. Individual behaviour management plans provide a clear and obvious guide for staff to follow. Where necessary young people receive intensive one to one clinical intervention programmes including cognitive behavioural therapy and counselling. The atmosphere in the setting encourages respect for each other and provides a safe environment for young people to learn and develop more acceptable ways of behaviour and attitude.

Young people are provided with consistent boundaries from staff in line with their own individual behaviour plans. Staff consistently encourage young people to address their problematic behaviours through discussion, considering alternatives and continued positive reinforcement. Young people have their behaviours linked to an incentive programme with their actions and efforts being considered regularly. Staff liaise with external agencies, including the local youth offending team, to ensure young people are assisted to address any criminal related behaviours.

All staff are suitably trained in the use of physical intervention with any incidents being thoroughly reviewed and considered. The ethos of the home is to engage young people in dialogue wherever possible and to continually seek alternatives to actual restraints being necessary. The use of restraint since the last inspection is very low.

A clear process is in place regarding the giving of sanctions which are well known by young people. Staff are encouraged to consider alternatives to the implementation of punitive sanctions. Where appropriate young people are engaged in discussion to consider their views on the type of sanction given to them. The idea of restorative approaches allows young people the chance to consider giving something back to those affected by their actions.

Behaviours such as being absent without authority are addressed in depth with appropriate protocols in place to respond to such events. Comprehensive information sheets are available for police should they require them which provides a clear and up to date description of the young person in question and some key facts including their vulnerabilities.

A zero tolerance approach to negative peer behaviours such as bullying, coupled with good numbers of staff ensures incidents of this nature are rare. When they do occur young people are given considerable support and guidance to think about their behaviours and how this affects others. No young people raised concerns that they were being bullied.

The health and safety of all those who live and work at the home are addressed appropriately. The routine checking, testing and servicing of fire fighting and electrical equipment takes place at regular intervals. Fire alarm drills are carried out monthly which exceeds the national minimum standard. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to address the whole living environment.

A thorough recruitment process ensures no members of staff work at the home unless all the required checks have been confirmed and considered.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

An excellent approach ensures the individual needs of young people are met. Consistently high levels of support are provided with key working playing a fundamental role in 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 while young people clearly benefit from one-to-one support offered by their key workers and other staff. Regular 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 the clinical physiologist 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 the development of their individual care plans and sign to agree to the boundaries and expectations of behaviour. 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 defines the type of programme they should be receiving. Close liaison with local authorities ensures that the correct type of provision is sought for each individual young person.

Young people benefit from living in a home where activities occur routinely. A senior member of staff holds responsibility for planning and arranging activities which allows for consistent and timely programmes being implemented. Staff display a high level of motivation and enthusiasm which in turn encourages young people to participate in the things they enjoy. Regular visits take place to local places of interest, the cinema and leisure centres. Wherever possible the individual interests of young people are supported and facilitated. The whole young person group went on holiday together during the summer which was seen as very positive by staff and young people alike.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The process in which young people are admitted to the setting is outstanding. A rigorous process ensures no young person moves in without first having their individual needs comprehensively assessed and considered. Input is gained for the suitability of every placement from the organisations child psychologist. Each referral is viewed alongside the existing needs, vulnerabilities and dynamics of the current living group.

The physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of each young person are incorporated into plans of care which highlight the individual needs of every young person in line with placement planning. Care plans provide an excellent and comprehensive assessment and planning framework which cover every aspect of care provision. Such 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. Care planning is holistic with the organisation ensuring intervention programmes such as therapy and counselling are provided.

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 person's circumstance, behaviour or emotional well-being are considered fully. The involvement of the organisations clinical psychologist in whole staff review meetings ensures a consistent and focused response to changes in circumstance or behaviour. Excellent reviews of care, focus on the progress of the respective young person against their care plan. Similar reports are provided for statutory looked after children reviews with young people being supported to attend and participate.

The particulars of any agreed contact arrangements are recorded in detail. Risk assessments are completed for such visits and updated when and if necessary. Clear records are kept of every contact which provides a 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 regularly 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, although formal written responses to questions are not provided. 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.

Young people are given excellent support and guidance as they approach adulthood. Specific plans are put in place to assist young people based on their age and abilities. The setting have developed their own life skills programme which takes account of local authority placement planning. Staff provide practical advice for issues such as learning to cook, going shopping and budgeting. Personal matters such as relationships, hygiene and safe sexual health are addressed appropriately and sensitively. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their own lifestyles and to consider how they may fit into living in the wider community. Young people are given particular support through periods of transition with their needs fully considered as part of any outreach programme once they move on from the home.

The home provides young people with high standards of accommodation within a homely environment. All areas of the home were found to be in a very good condition being well maintained throughout. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms and to help chose the décor of the home. Recently young people accompanied staff to purchase new sofas. Communal areas offer young people a good level of space and comfort with all modern entertainment items being available. Two lounges are available, while the rear of the property provides extremely nice outdoor space and facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A good level of information is provided which clearly describes the setting and the services it offers. The Statement of Purpose is up-to-date outlining all aspects of care provision. Young people have their own guide which is easy to understand including key issues such as the complaints procedure and the settings anti-bullying approach.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people play an integral and important role in contributing to the manner in which they are cared for. The individual needs of each young person are clearly taken seriously and acted upon. The care team is made up of a good gender balance with staff understanding the specific needs of young people extremely well. The culture of the setting encourages young people to appreciate and respect difference both within the home and the

wider community.

The numbers of staff on duty at any one time meet the assessed needs of young people. Where young people require additional support the numbers of staff are increased.

The staff team is settled, consisting of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners; two care staff vacancies have recently been filled pending appropriate checks being confirmed. This will see the staff team with a full complement.

New staff undertake an induction programme which focuses on all key areas of care provision alongside supportive guidance from senior staff and their peers. Continued training is provided with staff completing compulsory courses as required. On going training addresses all aspects of care and includes therapeutic concepts such as emotional containment and attachment theory.

Staff receive excellent levels of supervision. All staff receive supervision on a monthly basis which they say is meaningful and productive. Each member of staff also has monthly clinical supervision with the organisations psychologist to allow them to consider specific issues regarding their practice and the behaviours and emotional needs of young people. The same principle is applied toward whole staff team meetings with expert advice being provided as group supervision. This enables therapeutic ideas to be addressed within the dynamics of the whole adult community. Staff feel morale within the team is extremely good with excellent support and guidance being provided.

The management approach in running the home is extremely good. During the past 12 months the Registered Manager has been away on maternity leave. Throughout this period an acting manager has been in post. The acting manager has continued to manage the setting in a manner which places the particular needs of young people first. The Registered Manager has remained involved in the home and has for the past three months been spending at least one day a week working there. Such an approach has allowed the acting manager and Registered Manager to provide a consistent response to staff and young people alike. The Registered Manager is due to return from maternity leave and will work alongside the acting manager for a number of weeks to ensure a full handover is completed.

The organisations approach toward assessing the standard of care being provided is objective and self-evaluative. A rigorous monitoring process ensures all aspects of care provision are regularly considered and assessed. The acting manager has completed regular monitoring of care checks, while an external consultant carries out the required monthly monitoring inspections.

All records seen which are required to be kept, clearly reflect the progress and development of each young person placed at the setting, these being accurate and up to date.

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):

- consider displaying the responses to young persons questions following house meetings. (NMS 8.1)