

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Jackie Graves
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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

This service is in a residential community near the seaside. It provides accommodation for up to three young people aged between 12 and 18 years who require immediate accommodation due to placement breakdown or current crisis in their lives.

There is a lounge, kitchen, two staff offices and staff toilet on the ground floor. On the first floor there are two bathrooms, staff bedroom and three bedrooms for young people.

Considerable refurbishment has taken place to extend the premises and provide further communal space and a fourth bedroom. This is near completion. A large garden space is at the rear of the property.

Three young people currently live in the home. All three participated in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This unannounced full inspection looked at all the key standards and the standard relating to leisure activities. This inspection also looked at the progress the home has made in meeting the action and recommendations made at the last inspection.

The home provides a good service with some outstanding features. Strong, committed management supporting a dedicated, skilled staff team, is a strength of this child-centred home. Young people's behaviour is managed consistently to help them develop and make progress. They benefit from warm and positive relationships with adults in the home who encourage them to try different activities. Staff are respectful and understanding of young people's differences.

Young people are encouraged to have a voice and contribute to decision making regarding everyday matters in the home and about their future lives. The environment is comfortable and homely. Building work is ongoing to extend the premises and provide further communal areas, plus a bedroom for a fourth young person.

Improvements since the last inspection

The home was asked to record any incidents of bullying and has complied with this request.

Concerns, as well as complaints, are now recorded to evidence that the home takes these seriously.

In records of behaviour, the home now includes rewards which are given to young people to reinforce acceptable behaviour and to praise achievement.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to be healthy. Their individual health needs are clearly identified on plans and staff make arrangements for them to receive routine health services, for example, from dentist, general practitioners and opticians. Changing health needs are closely monitored to ensure young people receive any specialist services they need.

Sound arrangements are in place for the administration of medicines in the home. Medication is stored securely and clear records are kept of when and why medication is given. Staff obtain written permission, from a person with responsibility for each young person, to administer medication and first aid treatment

The home encourages healthy eating, with home cooked meals based on healthy ingredients. Mealtimes are pleasant, social occasions where young people and adults share food and chat. Staff closely monitor what young people are eating to ensure they have a nutritious diet.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people feel the staff protect them and keep them safe, providing a high level of care and attention. Staff form very supportive, warm relationships with the young people, who are happy living in a therapeutic environment.

There are appropriate levels of privacy in the home, for example, when young people use bathrooms or make telephone calls. The close supervision, provided by staff, reassures young people and helps them feel secure. However, staff balance close supervision with the need to encourage young people's independence and resilience.

The home's complaints policy encourages young people to raise any concerns and they may be confident that staff will take these concerns seriously. There are low numbers of complaints and these are logged and thoroughly investigated.

Bullying is not an issue in the home, although staff take this very seriously and watch for any signs. Staff help young people to understand the impact certain behaviour or words may have on other people which could be interpreted as bullying.

Young people regard the staff as firm but fair. Staff receive training to help them manage young people's behaviour safely. Records show fairly high numbers of physical interventions but these include staff using a light touch, for example to guide a young person to a quiet place. Restraint is used only appropriately to keep young people safe or prevent them causing harm to property or others. Rewards and the appropriate use of sanctions are used to help encourage acceptable behaviour.

There are clear guidelines for staff to follow should a young person not return to the home when they are expected. However, staff are fully aware of the vulnerability of some young people and incidents of them being absent without permission are rare.

Physical safety of the premises is promoted through regular fire drills and checks of fire equipment and systems. Young people are fully involved in fire drills so they are prepared to react appropriately in an emergency.

A robust, recruitment system ensures prospective staff are thoroughly checked before they start work in the home. Staff are trained in child protection and know how to deal with any concerns or allegations. They are reflective in their practice and continually strive to improve the ways in which they keep young people safe and protect them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There is excellent provision for helping young people to enjoy and achieve in all areas of their lives. Young people are very much seen as individuals and feel staff really listen to them. Supportive arrangements for key working are in place, with each young person allocated two key workers to monitor their individual needs. Key workers undertake specific tasks for their key young people, for example, helping to compile memory books for them. However, young people can and do approach any member of the staff team for support. Staff focus positively on what young people have done well and what they have achieved.

Staff encourage young people to pursue a varied range of hobbies and interests and these are included on individual weekly programmes of activities. Staff engage well with young people and encourage them make constructive use of their time in the home. Appropriate, positive activities are provided rather than an over reliance on television. Where appropriate, therapies are arranged to help young people's emotional and behavioural development, as well as enjoyment, for example, equine therapy and play therapy.

Young people benefit from regular breaks, a different lifestyle in the countryside at a holiday home in North Wales. The organisation of activities and therapies is very well managed, with full consultation and consents obtained from those with responsibility for the young people.

All young people are fully supported to attend their education placements. Staff

communicate well with school staff and keep clear records of young people's educational plans and progress. Young people feel the staff really take an interest in what they are doing at school and encourage them to make progress and achieve. Activities provided by staff promote education in the widest sense, for example by trips to museums and reading books which are supplied in the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff are good at listening to young people and helping them make a positive contribution to everyday matters in the home. Daily house meetings, and the young people's forum, provide good opportunities for young people to express their feelings, to give their views and to contribute to plans for the home. Young people are also supported to contribute to decision making about their lives, for example in key work sessions and for reviews of their placement.

Staff assess young people's needs to ensure these can be met in the home. Plans for their care are developed which detail arrangements for all aspects of young people's lives, for example, health, contact and care needs. Effective monitoring by key workers ensures these plans are adapted according to young people's changing needs.

If possible, young people are invited to visit the home before moving in so they can meet the staff and other young people and become familiar with the building. The needs of a proposed new resident, and the likely effect of their admission upon the existing group of residents, are carefully considered to make sure this is the right decision for all concerned.

Close support helps young people manage contact arrangements and the particular challenges that this may bring. Staff are aware of each young person's contact arrangements. They make sure that any impact contact has on young people is used to inform decision making on future arrangements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from having their own rooms which are made personal to them, including keeping small pets where this is appropriate. There is a pleasant standard of accommodation and the building is kept clean. This ensures a homely standard of accommodation for young people.

Following extensive refurbishment, there has been considerable improvement to the provision of communal space available within the home. Additionally, a further bedroom has been built so the home may increase the number of young people it cares for. At the time of the inspection, the building works were incomplete so not all new areas were in use. Young people have been fully consulted at all stages of the

planning and building work to ensure they can contribute their views and are kept informed. A few areas of the building appeared to be cold but the staff thought this was due to the ongoing building works.

Although none of the young people currently placed are of the age to contribute to a pathway plan, the staff do encourage young people to develop independence skills, for example, by helping staff to shop and prepare meals.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Young people benefit from a very well led, committed staff team who are focused on providing a quality service. The staff provide strong, positive role models for young people. Experienced, approachable management supports the staff team and carefully monitors what goes on in the home. This includes checking records for any patterns or trends and talking to young people and staff to gain their views on the home. Such monitoring ensures transparency and the continuous development of the service.

Staff feel well supported in their role. Business and staff development meetings are held every two weeks. There are opportunities for supervision and appraisal plus daily debriefs to discuss how each shift has gone. This ensures staff are fully supported to work as a professional team with a consistent approach towards the care of young people.

There is a commitment to employing full time staff and not using agency workers, so young people can build sound relationships with staff and receive continuity of care. High staffing levels ensure young people get all the support and attention they need. The staff team brings a diverse range of backgrounds, experience and qualifications. Staff undertake a very full induction which prepares them for their role. They are encouraged to attend training to further develop their skills and knowledge as well as gaining the recommended child care qualifications.

The service provides very clear written information on what it provides in the Statement of Purpose. This is kept under review to ensure the information remains current and relevant. A suitable version of this document is produced and personalised for each young person admitted to the home, so they know what to expect from their time there. Staff maintain extensive records for young people and make sure the personal information contained in these is treated as confidential.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's individual needs, including their religious and cultural needs, are clearly identified and met. Staff help them to overcome limits on what they can achieve and help access activities and experiences often denied to young people who are looked after.

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):

- monitor room temperatures to ensure heating is sufficient. (NMS 24)