

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 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 is a registered care home for five young people of either sex aged between 12 years and 18 years old. The home provides 24-hour care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is part of a small private organisation which provides residential childcare, leaving care services, fostering services, family outreach and a residential family centre.

The home is situated on the outskirts of a residential area. The house is indistinguishable from other houses as a children's home. The home has easy access to local amenities including stations. The home consists of five young people's bedrooms, two staff sleeping rooms/offices, two reception rooms, a kitchen/dining room, one separate toilet, one toilet/bathroom and a separate shower room. Externally there is an 80 foot garden and a front garden area. Five young people were residing in the home, of which three were involved in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This was a key unannounced inspection and all key standards in each of the outcome areas were reviewed. Placing authorities give positive feedback about the home and the beneficial impact it has had for young people. Staff have excellent skills in consulting and supporting young people effectively; ensuring care and support is highly individualised and child focused. Young people say they feel safe and that staff really care. Young people interview rate the home as 10 out of 10 and feel that the home should be graded as outstanding. Young people state 'you couldn't ask for better, this place is amazing'.

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations at the last inspection. Staff and management continue to strive to improve the life chances and outcomes for young people living at the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from a wide variety of nutritious home cooked foods which reflect people's choices and cultural heritage. Young people are actively encouraged to be involved in the household shopping. Those young people who are beginning

preparing for independence are allocated food budgets and storage. Young people are able to help themselves to healthy snacks at any time. Young people say they really enjoy the food describing it as 'awesome'.

Management and staff ensure excellent healthcare outcomes for young people. Staff ensure that young people healthcare is well managed. Young people have access to appropriate health services, such as doctors, dentists and opticians. Specialist health services are sought where required. Young people of all ages are supported in attending appointments. Information about health promotion services is freely accessible and staff promote healthy lifestyles. Health promotion discussions take place mainly in one to one sessions. The support of outside agencies is sought where appropriate.

The home has robust systems in place for the storage and administration of medication. Staff are trained in managing medication. Clear records are held of medication coming into and leaving the home and of medication given.

Staff are competent and have received training in key areas such as first aid, food handling, as well as emotional well-being and issues which affect young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home has excellent systems in place to safeguard young people. Young people say they feel safe living at the home and that they enjoy spending time with the staff who support them. Discussions with young people and observation of their interactions indicate that young people and staff enjoy positive relationships. Young people say 'you couldn't ask for better, this place is amazing.' 'Staff are really good role models. Some staff are like mums, they are strict but they are there for you when you need them. It's like being in a care home but like being in a family'. 'Staff act as if they really like us kids.'

Regular one-to-one discussions evidence how young people are encouraged to learn about keeping them self safe and to take responsibility for their actions. 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. These assessments are regularly reviewed and updated. A policy relating to bullying is in place and information is displayed in the home. Young people say no issues of bullying are currently experienced. However, staff have previously been proactive in addressing any issues of bullying and continue to ensure that young people are aware that bullying will not be tolerated. Young people say they feel able to talk to staff about such issues and are confident that the staff team will address them.

Clear systems are in place to promote good behaviour and the home is highly successful in engaging with young people to effect change. Individual reward programmes are in place which are geared to the individual goals for each young person and using rewards which are relevant to them. Sanctions applied are

appropriate, clearly recorded and monitored. However, on occasion cancelled sanctions are not clearly recorded as having been cancelled. Young people say that the rules in the home are fair and that sanctions applied are reasonable. Young people also say that staff talk about their behaviour with them, looking at why they acted in the way they did and how they can make choices on how to respond in the future. Young people say staff have helped them mature and take a step back, think about and take responsibility for their actions and develop self control. Staff have received training in restraint, however, only one restraint has taken place in the past six months.

The home is able to demonstrate that complaints are effectively responded to, investigated and managed. Young people know how to complain and have confidence in the home's ability to respond to any issues of concern which they may raise. Staff are aware of the principles of confidentiality and files are securely stored.

Staff receive child protection training as part of their induction. This is then built on through external training which is updated annually. Staff are aware of what to do in the event of an allegation or disclosure being made. Where any concerns have previously arisen the home has managed these appropriately. Young people who go missing are notified to the appropriate agencies in line with local guidelines and individual risk assessments.

The building is well maintained with regular checks in place to ensure safety is maintained. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice.

Young people are safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment through robust vetting practices. No staff are employed until essential checks, such as verification of a person's identity, criminal record and employment history, are carried out.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff ensure that care and support is delivered in an individualised, child-focused way. Care observed is very much geared to each child's personality and it is clear that positive relationships exist. All young people said that staff are committed to their welfare and that their needs are well met. Each young person has a detailed individual plan of care developed from the comprehensive assessments carried out prior to admission. Care plans address all areas of need including emotional, social and cultural needs. Individual goals are set and levels of support directed to those areas of need. Each young person has an identified key worker. Young people are consulted on all aspects of their life.

The home has good systems in place to promote the educational and life achievements of young people. Young people report that a key strength of the home is staff commitment and skill in motivating young people. Some young people have

secured recognised awards for the most improved student. Management and staff demonstrate a clear commitment to securing the best possible educational outcomes for young people. The home ensures regular attendance at school and college through the reward system. Staff are clear on the educational goals for young people, offer support with homework and attend all award ceremonies and parents' evenings. Staff ensure that each young person has a suitable educational placement and that close links with schools, colleges and Connexions are maintained. Where young people are awaiting school placements, staff have liaised with the placing authority to secure tutoring in the interim. Staff have supported young people in developing their curriculum vitae, developing portfolios and securing employment.

A wide variety of leisure opportunities are offered both within and outside of the home, which, are geared around the young people's interests. Young people enjoy challenging staff at football and have free access to the on-site gym. Opportunities to have meals out and trips to adventure parks such as Thorpe Park are organised. Time is set aside weekly for young people and their key workers to enjoy 'small activities' such as ice-skating or visit to the cinema according to the young people's choice. A holiday funded by the home has been enjoyed. Young people and placing authorities were highly positive about the leisure opportunities afforded the young people whilst living at the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home has excellent systems in place to ensure the individual needs of young people are met. Before a referral to the home is accepted, a comprehensive assessment process is followed from which an individual plan of care is developed. The care plan is kept under constant review and regularly updated to ensure any changes in need are identified. All needs detailed in the care plan are evidenced and followed through by staff. Any concerns about young people are fed back to the placing authority.

Placements are in most recent instances emergency ones, however, good systems are in place to manage this. Management ensure that the placing authority core assessment is provided to ensure that the home is able to meet the young person's needs. Where possible young people are encouraged to visit the home to meet staff and the other young people prior to moving in. Young people are made welcome when they arrive and are given a welcome pack. The home has demonstrated success in ensuring positive placements and ensuring minimum placement breakdown. The majority of young people move on to preparing for independence services or are successfully re-integrated into their family. Any planned moves are celebrated with a leaving party and gift. Staff 'stick with young people' and placements are cancelled by the home only in extreme circumstances.

Young people are effectively consulted on all aspects of their lives and information on outside agencies such as 'children's rights' are prominently displayed in the home. All young people are encouraged to take an active role in their reviews and be

involved in the development of their care plan. Young people gave an example of what they defined as 'extreme consultation'. Staff telephone young people if they are out, to find out their view on what the evening takeaway should be. Young people talk about the staff's ability to listen to what young people are actually saying. Residents' meetings are scheduled weekly but an open door policy and free access to manager's means that issues are addressed swiftly. Family members are able to visit the young people at the home and staff maintain regular telephone contact with key stakeholders. Staff demonstrate a commitment to supporting and developing family relationships. For example they help young people who find it difficult to verbally express themselves calmly and articulately to write about their feelings to family members. Young people speak very positively of their relationships with staff 'this place is caring, it's nice man'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The building provides the young people with welcoming homely accommodation that meets their needs. The home is well maintained and decorated, and young people have input into the choice of furnishings and fittings. Good systems are in place to ensure the ongoing safety of the building, such as regular checks of electrical and gas safety. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice. The building is situated in a residential area close to good transport links into a major city.

The home has good systems in place to support young people through adolescence and into adulthood. Young people receive good emotional support and are actively encouraged to develop self-reliance skills. Staff work with young people to secure appropriate education and work. Staff are in the process of developing portfolios and CVs with the young people. Young people are expected to care for their clothes, and are able to cook meals and are supported in learning budgeting skills. No young people are currently on a formal pathway plan, however, staff assist in the development of life skills. The organisation has a semi- independence service that young people are able to move on into if they wish.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people's individual needs are well met. Staff ensure the language, racial and cultural needs of all the young people are met and provide positive role models for young people. Young people feel well cared for by people who they trust and respect. Staff place young people at the centre of care delivery ensuring highly individualised, child-focused care.

The Statement of Purpose and children's guide are useful documents which are kept under review and serve to inform young people and placing authorities about the

services available within the home. Management ensure information is available to young people in formats which they can easily understand. For example, the children's guide is available on DVD to make the information more accessible to young people.

Staffing levels are suitable to meet the needs of the young people. A minimum of two staff are on duty at any given time day or night with a third at key points of activity. Staffing is deployed flexibly ensuring the needs of the young people are well met. The staff team is stable and experiences little turnover thus ensuring continuity of care. Where extra staffing is required this is covered by staff from within the home or staff from the organisation's 'bank' to further maintain continuity.

This is a very well-managed home which ensures staff are competent, well trained and supported. Staff enjoy working at the home and feel very well supported.

Staff feel that they work solidly together as a team to ensure excellent outcomes for young people. Staff say that the manager and the management team as a whole are approachable, flexible and supportive. Regular staff meetings and supervision ensure that staff are aware of key issues within the home. The organisation demonstrates a sound commitment to staff training and staff benefit from a wealth of training relevant to the roles they perform. Core training, such as child protection, first aid, food hygiene, behaviour management and health and safety, is provided to all staff and updated appropriately.

Staff demonstrate consistently a deep commitment to working with young people to secure the best life outcomes possible. Young people and placing authorities give highly complimentary feedback on how staff support young people. Young people feel the home deserves to be graded as outstanding and they rate it 10 out of 10. Young people referred to staff as being caring people who always acted as good role models.

The organisation has sound systems in place for monitoring the standards of care within the home. Any issues identified are swiftly addressed and the organisation is constantly striving to improve.

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):

- ensure any sanctions which are cancelled, are clearly recorded as having been so (NMS 22)