

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Maire Atherton
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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 local authority children's home providing planned longer term placements (a minimum of six months) for up to six young people aged between 10 and 17 years of age.

The detached house, created from two semi-detached houses, is near the town centre, on the edge of a residential housing estate. There are good transport links within easy reach of the home. For example, there is a train station within walking distance.

Downstairs the accommodation comprises a lounge, dining room, quiet room, games room and a kitchen. There is also an office and staff facilities. Upstairs there are six single bedrooms and two staff sleeping-in rooms. There are three bathrooms, two of which have all facilities, while the other one has a separate toilet.

There are six young people living in the home and all participated in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

This unannounced inspection looked at all the key standards under the Every Child Matters outcomes. The home offers an outstanding service to young people.

The manager provides strong and effective leadership to an established, highly experienced and committed staff team. Young people are cared for in a way that effectively promotes their health and well-being. They benefit from individual support that keeps them safe and teaches them how to keep themselves safe. The warmth of relationships between the staff and the young people forms the basis of good behaviour management, with an emphasis on the promotion of positive behaviour.

Young people's education is given a high priority and educational achievement is very well supported and celebrated. Young people's views are actively sought and listened to and they have adults outside the home that they can talk to.

Staff value the young people as individuals and work to communicate this to the young people so that they learn to value themselves.

Improvements since the last inspection

There was one action made in the last report. The use of language in the sanctions records conforms with the requirements of the regulations, namely the word 'fine' is not used to describe reparation.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people say that staff give them excellent encouragement to follow a healthy lifestyle. The cook and the rest of the staff team provide lots of information and advice on healthy eating and strong encouragement and support in pursuing opportunities for exercise. The food provided is of an excellent standard, the meals are balanced, nutritious and reflect the different cultural and religious dietary needs of young people and staff. The snacks available promote the development of good eating habits but not to the exclusion of treats. One young person said, 'There is a never ending supply of food and drink in this house.' Older young people are encouraged to develop their skills so that they are prepared for budgeting for food, buying ingredients and learning about food hygiene as part of preparation for independence. Mealtimes are a social occasion where staff and young people sit together, talking about the day and making plans for the evening.

The home pays excellent attention to making sure young people's health care needs are properly identified and consistently met. Young people have ready access to the designated nurse for children in care. She visits the home regularly, providing good advice and support on the sort of health risks they might face as they grow up, as well as addressing current concerns. There are comprehensive health care plans in place and staff ensure that these are followed, reviewed and revised when required. Staff liaise effectively with any relevant specialist health care staff to make sure young people get the treatment they need to promote both their physical and mental health.

Staff ensure the administration and storage of medication is handled safely and recorded carefully. The home's records provide a detailed picture of health care appointments and any treatment. Staff are trained in first aid and the safe management of medication. There are written consents in place for the administration of non-prescribed medication but not for first aid. Young people say they are well looked after when they are ill.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff respect the privacy of young people and encourage them to protect their own privacy. Young people know that records and documents that relate to them are stored securely. There is sufficient communal space so that young people can meet privately with friends and relatives when they visit without impinging too much on

the activities of others.

Young people know how to complain and for those for whom English is an additional language complaints, along with other procedures, are explained through interpreters. There have been no formal complaints. Young people informally express their views and complaints to staff on a regular basis. Young people say that staff are good at responding to their concerns and one said, 'If I was worried about something someone would notice and talk to me.' Young people report that bullying is not tolerated in the home, are confident that staff would notice any bullying and deal with it. Staff know the young people very well and are highly attuned to their interactions and intervene at an early stage to de-escalate and defuse potential confrontation. Staff are also skilled at getting young people together to talk about their differences and understand each other's point of view, using an interpreter where needed.

Young people are very well protected from abuse and staff know how to respond appropriately to any allegation or suspicion of abuse and contribute to strategy meetings where required. There is annual refresher safeguarding training provided for the staff team. Young people are supported to access 'R U Safe' external training that encourages them to consider how to promote their own safety.

The development and maintenance of excellent relationships between the staff and the young people is a real strength. There is considerable warmth and affection in their interactions, in both the banter and the way young people seek and receive appropriate physical reassurance and security from staff. These relationships provide a strong platform for effective behaviour management, as seen in the reduction in the use of sanctions and no physical interventions since the last visit. There have also been no instances of unauthorised absence.

There are robust health and safety systems in place; including updated risk assessments, regular equipment checks and servicing and a prompt response to repairs, that ensure that young people are provided with safe, comfortable and well maintained accommodation.

The recruitment records were not inspected on this occasion as the sole new member of staff joined from another home managed by the local authority. Staff ensure that only appropriately checked visitors may meet with the young people unsupervised.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide young people with excellent individual support, with very regular opportunities for one to one time. Staff know the young people very well and implement strategies to engage them and identify their areas of interest. Cultural and religious backgrounds are respected and effort is made to understand difference. Young people attend places of worship and celebrate important festivals that are

significant to them.

Staff are very effective in promoting the education of young people through active support and encouragement with homework for example, one young person said, 'Staff help and they check.' Additional tuition is obtained where this is helpful to young people. A family member commented, 'I am very pleased with how well her schooling is going'. Staff have established excellent links with the schools attended by the young people. One member of staff has attended specialist training on statements of educational need.

Young people are encouraged to pursue their hobbies and develop new ones. Staff assist young people to identify suitable groups and activities and if required, support them to attend. One young person said, 'Staff find relevant clubs and or lessons'. The home also provides young people with in-house entertainment such as games consoles and arts and crafts materials.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are comprehensively assessed prior to admission and are also considered in the light of the needs of the other young people resident to ensure that the placement is suitable. The assessed needs inform the written care plan which is reviewed and updated regularly. Young people are actively encouraged to read and comment on the monthly summaries which inform the care plan review. Young people also contribute to and attend their child in care reviews and the documentation clearly reflects their views.

Young people enjoy meaningful contact with their family and friends. Staff are aware of the significance of contact and are sensitive in their management of this for young people. Visitors are warmly welcomed into the home.

Young people have a voice in the home. This is achieved on an individual basis through one to one meetings and conversation around the dining table as well as more formally through regular residents' meetings. The home effectively promotes advocacy for the young people by the use of carefully matched independent visitors and monthly visits by a representative from an independent advocacy service. The local authority representatives who visit the home also give the young people an opportunity to talk to them.

Moving in and moving on arrangements are tailored to meet the needs of individual young people. Young people are given opportunities to visit and provided with written information before moving in. Young people move on to independent settings that are appropriate to their needs and vulnerabilities and staff offer good ongoing support to young people once they have moved on.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home's design and appearance means that it blends well into the neighbourhood. Staff ensure the external appearance of the home and garden areas is properly maintained so that it looks well cared for and welcoming. Internally the home has sufficient personal and communal space for young people and staff. The décor and furnishing is of a good standard and is well maintained by staff, with very high standards of cleanliness, so that young people can be proud of the way their home looks.

The staff encourage young people to develop and maintain skills they will need to live independently. This is initially achieved through regular participation in age appropriate household chores. This builds incrementally so that young people can experience budgeting, cooking and managing their own time while still resident. The staff encourage young people to think about their long term prospects in relation to employment and how to achieve their aims. While young people continue to be offered support to attend various appointments, they are expected to start to manage these interactions themselves as they grow in age and confidence in preparation for independent living. For example in seeking part-time work; young people are supported in compiling a Curriculum Vitae, accompanied in taking them to potential employers and prepared in how to make a telephone call to a prospective employer.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home has a Statement of Purpose, updated annually, which clearly sets out what they provide and hope to achieve with young people. There is also written information about the home for young people.

There is an effective and well respected manager in post. One social worker commented, 'The ethos of this establishment is very influenced by the manager who I have been very impressed with. Her knowledge and outlook on life help staff and residents alike.' The highly experienced and well trained staff team is subject to little change, providing young people with consistent care from adults well equipped to meet their individual needs. The staff team comprises male and female staff with a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds, providing positive role models for young people. Staff receive excellent support to achieve relevant formal qualifications, and refresher training is provided in key areas of practice so that staff are kept up to date with good practice developments and are well equipped to meet young people's needs.

Clear arrangements are in place for deputising in the absence of the manager and shifts are led by suitably experienced senior staff. The good staffing levels ensure that young people are provided with frequent opportunities for individual work and

support. Rotas are well planned and staff have time to undertake administrative tasks and attend meetings alongside direct child care duties.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff are careful to identify, meet and promote the needs of young people as individuals and seek advice and guidance to help them to learn. Young people understand that discrimination of any kind is not tolerated in the home and staff create an environment of respect.

Staff communication, for example in records, handovers and staff meetings, is consistently focused on the young people. Staff are well supported through regular formal supervision and the manager provides informal support as needed. Monitoring of practice in the home is undertaken in a variety of ways. The manager works regularly on shift giving her a clear picture of the care provided and the practice of the staff team. There are clear in-house systems for monitoring the matters required by the regulations and the report of the monthly external visits by the local representatives is exceptionally thorough.

Staff maintain records to a high standard, providing a detailed picture of a young person's time in the home, and ensure that they are kept securely.

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 there is written consent on file for first aid treatment for each young person. (NMS 13.4)