

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC007284
Inspection date	10/02/2011
Inspector	Joanna Heller
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	03/09/2010
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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 home accommodates six young people of either sex aged between 12 years and 18 years old. The home offers 24-hour care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties and/or learning disabilities on the autistic spectrum.

The home is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a large city. The home has easy access to all local amenities including high street markets and good transport links.

Five young people were living at the home, of whom four 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 an unannounced key inspection carried out as part of the annual inspection programme. All key standards in each of the Every Child Matters outcome areas were reviewed.

The service is judged as outstanding. This is a well-managed home with a clear vision about how it wishes to continue to develop. Staff place young people at the centre of care delivery ensuring highly individualised, child-focused care. Young people and staff have solid relationships built on mutual trust and respect. Staff ensure excellent outcomes for children in all aspects of their lives. Social workers and parents are highly positive about the care provided and how staff work in partnership with them. Young people score the home as 10 out of 10 and refer to staff as caring people who are fun to be around. Young people say: 'It's brilliant, everyone is friendly, staff are respectful and nice. It feels safe here, everyone looks out for you.'

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were set at the previous inspection.

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 regularly involved in the preparation of meals and get quite competitive with the standard of meals they

prepare. Young people are able to help themselves to healthy snacks at any time. Young people say they really enjoy the food and getting actively involved in shopping. Where young people have an unhealthy relationship with food this is explored and young people are supported to address underlying issues.

Management and staff ensure excellent healthcare outcomes for young people. 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. Systems to reward and promote the attendance at key healthcare appointments are in place such as travelling in a favourite car. 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 and self-harming behaviour. Young people, their families and social workers all feel that staff excel in ensuring young people receive good healthcare.

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 that they can talk to any of the staff about anything, at any time. Parents say that they leave the home following contact, secure in the belief that their child is safe and well cared for.

Management ensure 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. Parents are also highly positive about staff and feel able to discuss any issues of concern with them. Young people feel that staff advocate for them ensuring that other professionals listen to their views. Staff support young people to access outside advocacy when they are concerned about significant issues which will affect their welfare. Staff are aware of the principles of confidentiality and files are securely stored. Room searches only take place where staff have significant concerns regarding young people's safety.

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. Staff are clear about

the boundaries and expectations placed upon them. Young people who go missing are notified to the appropriate agencies in line with local guidelines and individual risk assessments. The home has been very successful in reducing young people's patterns of going missing, to a point where this is an unusual occurrence. Young people say they enjoy being at the home, spending time with the staff.

Regular one-to-one discussions evidence how young people are encouraged to learn about keeping themselves 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 intolerance, 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. Young people refer to being able to earn up to £20 a week in addition to their pocket money on the basis of achieving the targets set with them. Sanctions applied are appropriate, clearly recorded and monitored. 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 changes in the future. Placing authorities refer to staff as being excellent at maintaining a consistent approach so that young people know the rules and the boundaries. Staff have received training in restraint; however, only one restraint has taken place in the past 12 months. Staff are clear that restraint is only applied when young people are presenting significant risk to themselves or others.

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 are 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. Young people, their parents and placing authorities feel 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. Clear individual goals are set and levels of support directed to those areas of need. Care practice is reflective and staff review how well they are supporting young people. Young people benefit from staff from a diverse range of backgrounds who are able to support their cultural needs and provide positive role models.

The home has excellent systems in place to promote the educational and life achievements of young people. Tutors and placing authorities report that a key strength of the home is staff commitment and skill in motivating young people and ensuring consistent boundaries. Staff ensure regular attendance at school/education. Attendance and commitment to education are linked to young people's individual reward systems. For example, one young person has entered into an agreement with the home that if they attend education full time, for a full month, they will earn the reward of a ride in a particular sports car. Staff are clear about 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 and educational services are maintained. Staff have supported young people in developing their curriculum vitae, developing portfolios and securing employment. Young people who have moved on to independent living have maintained college placements and apprenticeships which began while living at the home. A selection of age-appropriate games and reading materials are available, as are games consoles, which young people enjoy playing with staff.

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, badminton, swimming and visits to a local gym. Opportunities to have meals out and trips to adventure parks are organised. Time is set aside weekly for young people and their key workers to enjoy 'small activities' such as bowling, ice-skating, shopping or visits to the cinema according to the young people's choice. Two holidays funded by the home have been enjoyed in the past year. Young people and placing authorities are highly positive about the leisure opportunities afforded to the young people while 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. Any concerns about young people are fed back to the placing authority. Social workers highlight that the detailed preadmission questions

and assessment processes give placing authorities confidence that staff are clear about the care plan and how to achieve it.

Placements are, in most recent instances, emergency ones, however, robust 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 minimal 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. Where management feel they are unable to continue to care for a young person due to placement breakdown this is sensitively handled and extra support put in place to maintain the placement for a few days to allow a suitable alternative placement to be found.

Staff are clear that the work they do has to be developed from a relationship with young people built on trust. Young people trust staff and say they can talk to them about anything. Young people refer to staff as 'brilliant' and 'really kind people who are respectful and listen to you'. 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. Young people feel that staff advocate for them well with other professionals ensuring their voice is heard. 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 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 managers mean 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.

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. Young people are supported to informally learn independence skills from the time they come to the home, for example, to care for their clothes, cook meals and are supported in learning budgeting skills. One of the young people particularly likes getting involved in basic DIY tasks. No young people are of the age to have a pathway plan, however, clear processes are in place for when this should be relevant. The organisation has a semi-independence service that young people are able to move 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 diverse 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 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.

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 consistently demonstrate 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 refer to staff as being caring people who always act as good role

models and with whom they have fun.

This is a well managed home with a clear vision on how it wishes to continue to develop. 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.