

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	7 May 2010
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	21 December 2009
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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 outcome for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and relevant National Minimum Standards for the establishment.

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 privately run children's home is registered to care for up to four young people, of either sex, aged from 11 to 17 years old. It is registered to care for young people whose primary needs arise from emotional or behavioural difficulties.

The house is made up of three floors. The ground floor comprises a bedroom, a shower room with toilet and a combined kitchen and dining area. On the first floor, there is a communal lounge, the staff office and the manager's office. These offices also serve as staff sleep-in rooms. On the upper floor, there are two en-suite bedrooms. Separate to the house, across the rear yard, is an independent bedsit annexe with bedroom, kitchen and toilet. The home does not have a garden.

At the time of the inspection, three young people were living at the home and two young people were in the premises. The inspector spoke briefly to one young person and the other declined to become involved.

Summary

This was an unannounced, interim inspection. It assessed the key national minimum standards (NMS) associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met one requirement and seven recommendations made at the previous inspection on 21 December 2009. These were about residential placement plans, administration of medications, recording of sanctions, measures to counter bullying, risk assessments, admission procedures and seeking the views of parents.

There are significant weaknesses in the recruitment procedures, meaning the registered persons are committing an offence and putting the welfare of young people at risk. For example, they do not always carry out recruitment checks on staff even though such staff have regular contact with young people. The registered persons try to ensure such staff are always supervised but this is not a suitable alternative. Additionally, full employment histories of staff are not always in place and recruitment decisions are not recorded in adequate detail.

Although clear risk assessments for young people are in place, these do not always reflect what is actually happening in the lives of young people. There is therefore a concern that risks are being underestimated. However, the assessments themselves are clear and easy to understand.

The staff are aware of how to respond appropriately to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse and there is no bullying in the home.

The Registered Manager and staff are effective at enabling young people to behave positively and they rarely need to use sanctions or physical intervention.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The staff are now enabled to be more clear about young people's needs because the residential placement plans are updated regularly and the plans contain relevant information.

The Registered Manager and staff assess the needs of young people who are considered for admission to the children's home and do not allow an admission to take place unless the needs of the young person and the existing group of young people are compatible.

Improvement in care quality is now more possible because the Registered Manager and staff send out questionnaires to parents seeking their views about the care provided.

The arrangements in place to improve safety have also improved. For example, young people are now enabled to add their signature and comments to the bound record of sanctions and restraints. Also, the risk assessments are more informative because they measure the likelihood and seriousness of hazards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Administration of medication is recorded appropriately, although the records of prescribed medications do not always record when or why young people refuse to take their medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Young people have the privacy they need when they need it and staff understand the boundaries of confidentiality. Young people can also make and receive telephone calls in private without having to ask the staff.

A complaints system is in place should young people wish to raise issues formally. No complaints have been made since the previous inspection and an appropriate recording format is in place.

The staff are aware of how to respond to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse and they have all received relevant training. The home does not keep a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures. Although these are available online, they are less readily accessible to the staff, especially if there is a problem with internet access. Suitable policies and procedures are in place should a young person fail to return to the home on time. However, this happens very rarely.

The Registered Manager and staff assess the risk of hazards that may affect young people. The risk assessments are easy to understand and are up to date. However, they do not fully represent what is happening in young people's lives and so underestimate the potential risks. Additionally, the risks of bullying and being bullied have not been assessed. Consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated. Aside from this, suitable measures are taken to minimise the risk of bullying and this is not an issue of concern in the home.

It is of significant concern that the registered persons do not always complete the necessary checks before deciding to employ someone. This potentially compromises the safety of young

people and is illegal. Recruitment procedures are also weak in other ways. For example, the recording of information about current staff and about recruitment decisions is incomplete.

The Registered Manager and staff work proactively with young people to promote positive behaviour. Consequently, it is very rarely necessary to impose sanctions or use physical intervention. However, the home does not always inform Ofsted of all significant events that occur. For example, two significant events have occurred since the previous inspection but Ofsted were not informed. This means it is impossible for the regulator to monitor serious issues if necessary.

The home itself is maintained as safe premises. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Fire drills are undertaken regularly, including occasional drills at night.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The Registered Manager and staff regularly review the care plans of young people and update them as necessary. The residential placement plans set out the range of needs as recommended by the national minimum standards which means the staff can be clear about the care each young person requires.

The needs of any new young people who may be admitted to the home are assessed appropriately before a decision is made about whether to admit them or not. This helps to protect the needs of the incoming young person and also the needs of young people already living in the children's home.

The Registered Manager and staff ask parents their opinions about the quality of care. This helps to ensure the quality of care improves as shortfalls are identified.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The registered persons are not maintaining a complete record about the members of staff who work at the home. This means that if anyone should require their details in the future, the necessary information may not be available. Weaknesses in recruitment procedures reflect the judgement for organisation.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Statutory requirements

This section sets out the actions, which must be taken so that the registered person meets the Care Standards Act 2000, The Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
20	ensure that Ofsted are notified of all relevant significant events (Regulation 30)	7 May 2010
26	ensure that the risk assessments concerning young people are representative of the real issues occurring in the children's home (Regulation 23)	7 May 2010
27	ensure that no person who has regular contact with young people is employed to work at the children's home unless that person is fit to work there, specifically by ensuring that the checks described in paragraphs 1 to 6 of Schedule 6 have been conducted (Regulation 26)	7 May 2010
34	maintain in the children's home a record of relevant details in respect of each person working at the home. (Regulation 29, Schedule 4 paragraph 2)	21 May 2010

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure the insurance certificate records the address of the children's home (NMS 26.9)
- maintain a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board policies and procedures in the premises (NMS 17.2)
- assess separately the risk of each young person being a victim and a perpetrator of bullying and the times and places where bullying may occur in the house (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that all recruitment decisions are fully recorded. (NMS 27.2)