

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	21 December 2009
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	30 July 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 of 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 bed-sit annexe with bedroom, kitchen and toilet. The home does not have a garden.

There were two young people present during the inspection and they chose not to speak to the inspector about their care.

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 the five requirements and eleven recommendations made at the previous inspection on 30 July 2009. These were about young people's residential plans, recording of medications, monthly monitoring, the provider's financial accounts, risk assessments, fire drills, obtaining parental views of the quality of care, the Statement of Purpose and maintenance issues.

The Registered Manager and staff promote the safety of young people appropriately. However risk assessments are not as robust as they should be and the comments of young people concerning any use of sanctions and restraints are not fully in line with the recommendations made in the national minimum standards.

One requirement and several recommendations made at the previous inspection have not been met and so have been repeated here. This is because the outcomes associated with how well young people are able to make a positive contribution are still not being met adequately.

As this was an interim inspection, it did not assess all of the key NMS. Consequently there was not enough evidence to assess or amend the overall outcome judgement made at the previous inspection.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Manager and staff are now promoting better health for young people because of a number of improvements in their practice.

Specifically, residential placement plans now contain full details of each young person's health needs and how the staff should meet these needs on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, when a

member of staff administers medication to a young person, they record the details in the young person's case file as well as in the home's file.

Parental permission, in writing, is also in place enabling the staff to administer first aid and non-prescription medication as necessary.

These improvements ensure greater accountability and they are compliant with legislation and the national minimum standards.

The safety of care has also improved since the previous inspection. Specifically, in line with the national minimum standards, the child protection policies and procedures now make clear how staff must respond if allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse arise concerning the registered provider or manager. In addition, fire drills are also occasionally conducted at night. This helps young people to be well-prepared for activation of the fire alarm at any time.

An aspect of care relevant to enabling young people to make a positive contribution has also improved. Specifically, the outcomes of any care review meetings are now recorded immediately in the young people's files.

The homeliness and condition of the premises has also improved because the front doorbell is now in working order and the fire door on the first floor no longer makes a loud slamming noise. However, the toilet seat is still loose and uncomfortable.

Organisational arrangements have also improved. The Registered Manager takes into account the views of young people, parents and placing authorities when conducting the monthly formal monitoring of care. The registered provider has submitted the financial accounts to Ofsted and these are now being assessed. The staffing arrangements are also more clear because the staffing policy is described in the home's Statement of Purpose.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Residential placement plans contain full details of each young person's health needs and how the staff should meet these needs on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, when a member of staff administers medication to a young person, they record the details in the young person's case file as well as in the home's file. These measures provide greater clarity for staff.

Written permission from parents is in place thereby permitting the staff to administer first aid and non-prescription medication to young people if necessary.

However administration of medications is still not adequately robust. For example, the actual time of administration of medication is not recorded and the reason for administration of non-prescription medication is also not recorded. Consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

As this was an interim inspection, the remainder of this outcome was not assessed. Consequently, there was not enough evidence to change the judgement-rating made at the previous inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Sound arrangements are in place to ensure young people are safe.

Young people have the privacy they need when they need it. They have ready access to a phone on which they can make and receive calls in private without having to ask permission. Room searches are very rare and an appropriate recording format is in place to ensure full accountability.

Young people are enabled to raise concerns and make formal complaints if necessary. Useful information is also displayed which enables young people to raise concerns with external agencies. However, the staff deal with most issues quickly and effectively at an informal level.

The staff are also knowledgeable about how to respond appropriately to any allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. All the staff have recently received good quality training in safeguarding young people's welfare. Sound arrangements are also in place to counter bullying although this is not an issue of concern within the home. However, the counter bullying measures are not as strong as they could be because the Registered Manager and staff do not separately assess the risk of a young person being the victim and perpetrator of bullying.

Appropriate measures are also in place should any young person fail to return to the children's home on time. A suitable recording format is also in place. Young people rarely go missing or fail to return to the home on time.

The Registered Manager and staff are effective at promoting positive behaviour. They rarely use sanctions and they only use restraint in appropriate circumstances. However, the bound records of sanctions and restraints do not record any views or signatures of young people, although young people do sign entries in their case file about restraints. Failure to record their views in the bound books means accountability is weakened since the case file may well be taken back by the placing authority after a placement ends.

The staff discuss behaviour management at monthly staff meetings and they receive annual training about how to respond to challenging behaviour.

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. Appropriate insurance is in place.

Recruitment procedures are also robust and in line with the legislation and national minimum standards. This helps to ensure that only staff who are suitable come to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

There is a risk that young people's needs will not be met because these are not fully described in the residential placement plans. For example, cultural and religious needs are not described. Consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

In addition, residential placement plan documentation is not being updated after the plans have been reviewed. This means the staff are not being informed adequately about changes in plans, and it is therefore harder to know what current needs are and how these should be met. Consequently a requirement made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

When any young person is admitted to the home, the Registered Manager or staff do not record any confirmation that the admission is appropriate having considered the needs of the young person and of the current group of residents. Consequently, admission procedures are not as robust as they could be and so a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

Shortfalls in quality are less likely to be identified and addressed because parents are not being asked their opinion about specific aspects of care quality as recommended in the national minimum standards. Consequently a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

As this was an interim inspection, the remainder of this outcome was not assessed. Consequently, there was not enough evidence to change the judgement-rating made at the previous inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The children's home is homely, clean and well-maintained. The front doorbell is in working order and the fire door on the first floor no longer makes a loud slamming noise. However, the toilet seat is still loose and uncomfortable.

As this was an interim inspection, the remainder of this outcome was not assessed. Consequently, there was not enough evidence to change the judgement-rating made at the previous inspection.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Registered Manager takes into account the views of young people, parents and placing authorities when conducting the monthly formal monitoring of care. These means quality monitoring is more robust.

In addition, staffing arrangements are clear for others to know about because the staffing policy is described in the home's Statement of Purpose.

As this was an interim inspection, the remainder of this outcome was not assessed. Consequently, there was not enough evidence to change the judgement-rating made at the previous inspection.

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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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3	keep under review and revise the residential placement plan as necessary. (Regulation 12(2))	15 January 2010
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Recommendations

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

- record the actual time of administration of medications and the reason when non-prescription medication is administered (NMS 13.2)
- ensure young people are enabled to add their signature and comments to the bound record of sanctions and restraints (NMS 22.14)
- assess separately the risk of each young person being a victim and a perpetrator of bullying (NMS 18.5)
- include a measure of likelihood and severity when assessing the risks of hazards to young people (NMS 26.2)
- ensure that the residential placement plan for each child sets out the range of needs as described in the standard (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that when a child is admitted to the children's home, both the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents are recorded in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- ensure the opinions and views of the parents of children at the home are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis unless inappropriate, including their views on the issues described in the standard. (NMS 8.6)