

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	9 June 2009
Inspector	Jennifer Reed
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	25 February 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

The home is registered with Ofsted to provide accommodation for one young person, of either gender, aged between seven years and under 18 years of age. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Staffing levels are provided to meet each young person's identified needs. The home's manager is registered with Ofsted.

The home is a semi-detached house, located in a residential setting within a village; local services are within easy reach. A more comprehensive range of public services, shopping and leisure facilities can be accessed in the nearby town. The home comprises of a sitting room with dining area and a kitchen on the ground floor. On the upper floor is the young person's and the staff member's bedrooms, the staff office and a family bathroom. There is an enclosed garden at the rear of the property; roadside parking is available.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection of the home and all key National Minimum Standards were inspected. The young person was present in the home during part of the inspection process.

This well managed home provides excellent support to accommodated young people. Staff work collaboratively with the placing authority and local agencies to make sure that young people receive appropriate services to meet their individual needs. Safeguarding practices are robust and health promotion is strong. Young people benefit from the support of a consistent, experienced and well qualified staff team. Young people are happy living in this home and they make good developmental and educational progress. No actions or good practice recommendations were made at this inspection.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has satisfactorily met both of the good practice recommendations made at the previous inspection in February 2009.

The fire risk assessment for the home has been reviewed in the past 12 months to ensure that it continues to accurately assess any likely risk of fire.

Night storage heaters remain fitted within the home. However, the home has purchased portable electric radiators to supplement the insufficient output of the night storage heaters in cold weather conditions. The registered person is liaising with the landlord to review the fixed heating system in place.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home makes an outstanding effort to promote young people's health and welfare. Structured health plans ensure young people have regular medical checks and staff make the necessary arrangements for young people to access and receive specialist medical services as appropriate.

The home has established a strong working relationship with local health teams and in particular, has formed a good working partnership with the local Looked After Children's Nurse. Young people benefit from this collaborative approach to health promotion. Additionally, the home provides a good range of health information to support accommodated young people. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment and ability to work innovatively, helping young people to develop and make sense of their emotional and health issues as they move towards adulthood. For example, young people have the opportunity to care for a 'Trial Baby' for a week, to help them understand and experience the demands of good parenting. Young people are encouraged to take regular exercise and get sufficient rest.

The comprehensive health policies and procedures provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively meet young people's health needs. The systems in place for the administration of medication and the keeping of medical records are well considered and provide a robust framework to underpin safe medication practices within the home. For example, copies of prescriptions are kept on file, to check that dispensing is accurate and young people receive the right dosage and the correct medication. The home asks the young person's doctor to confirm in writing which homely remedies are suitable to be given for minor ailments. All medication is kept securely within suitable storage arrangements. Staff working in the home are trained in basic First Aid procedures and the home seeks permission from persons with parental responsibility to give any emergency first aid treatment that young people may need.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy and nutritional diet. The home provides a range of meals which offer young people a varied and balanced diet. Young people also have a choice about what they eat and they are able to join staff in food shopping trips and can help staff plan the menu for the coming week. Young people are able to cook meals and make snacks. Hygiene standards within the kitchen are high; the staff follow and effectively implement safe food handling and storage procedures. All staff complete food hygiene training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home makes an outstanding effort to keep young people safe and ensure that their welfare is promoted. Clear policy and procedural guidance provides staff with good information about how to care for young people and underpins examples of excellent practice. Safeguarding issues are recognised and staff take the necessary measures to limit any possible risk of harm to young people. The home is particularly good at keeping the placing authority and parents informed by sharing relevant information and the staff work collaboratively with other agencies to ensure that young people are kept safe. Staff are knowledgeable about child protection issues and undertake regular training in safeguarding. Young people are further protected by the home's policy on unauthorised absences and the staff's adherence to promptly implementing procedural guidance. The home seeks to identify any necessary and possible measures to reduce absences; this pro-active approach has benefited young people and helped keep them safe. Young people do not experience bullying in this single placement home; the staff risk assess and monitor the likelihood of bullying occurring outside of the home and take action to address the matter if it arises.

Young people have sufficient privacy within the home. Young people have their own bedrooms and there are clear policies in place that promote privacy and respect children's rights whilst ensuring young people are protected from the risk of harm. The complaints system provides

an accessible means for parents, neighbours and young people to raise any concern that they might have; there have been no complaints made since the previous inspection. Behaviour management strategies employed within the home are designed for the individual young person; they are detailed and have proven to be effective. All staff are trained in de-escalation and control and restraint techniques and staff are competent at managing young people's challenging behaviour; there have been no restraints undertaken since the home was last inspected. Few sanctions are given to young people; staff discuss any sanction with the young person before it is given to ensure that the young person is in agreement with the sanction and it will be effective.

Risk assessments are completed to a high standard and include assessment of the premises, hazardous substances, the risk of fire, activities and young people's behaviour; they are regularly reviewed and updated. Regular utilities, fire safety systems and equipment checks are completed and the home carries out both day and night-time fire drills to ensure that young people and staff know how to safely evacuate the home in an emergency.

The company follows 'Safer Recruitment' guidelines and recruitment and selection processes have been recently reviewed and updated to include best practice guidance. Personnel files for staff working in this home were not looked at during this inspection; there are no new staff employed to work in this home and these staff files have been examined at a previous inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from the outstanding level of individual support provided by the home. The staff work diligently to fully implement young people's care plans and ensure that young people have access to the specialist support and services that they need to help them develop. Young people make good progress and staff praise young people for their efforts. The staff demonstrate high levels of commitment to young people and demonstrate their capability in successfully managing aspects of challenging behaviour, contributing to maintaining young people in positive placements. The staff are non-judgemental in their approach and focus their attention on helping young people to improve their self-esteem and develop their confidence. Young people are valued for their unique qualities and character and staff encourage and support young people to develop their own thinking and ideas about their futures.

The home supports young people in their education and the implementation of Personal Education Plans. Staff liaise with schools and listen to young people's views about their education. The home has been successful in helping young people back into mainstream provision and sustaining their attendance. There is sufficient space and quiet within the home for young people to study.

Young people are able to take part in a range of activities, or if they prefer, to spend time within the local community with their friends. The staff help young people to increase their understanding of relationships and how to maintain their friendships with their peers.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's placement plans are carefully structured to reflect the aims and objectives of the placing authority and to meet their assessed needs; placement plans take risk assessment

outcomes into account. Staff consult with young people about the content of their plans and young people have the opportunity to contribute their views. The deputy manager of the home regularly goes through the plan with young people to make sure they fully understand what is expected of them and to review the targets they are aiming to achieve. The home's placement plan is promptly updated in response to arising issues and it includes decisions made at young people's review meetings. Young people are supported to express their opinions and to attend their statutory reviews which take place within the required timescales.

The home supports young people to maintain contact with their friends and families. Staff are sensitive to family dynamics and are aware of the difficulties young people often experience in returning home for contact visits. Young people benefit from the flexible approach taken and the behaviour management strategies put in place by the home, to ensure that contact is a positive experience for all and contact arrangements are successfully maintained. Young people's family and friends are made welcome in the home.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and considered manner. Staff work collaboratively with placing authorities to make admissions and discharges as smooth as possible, ensuring that young people are kept fully informed and have sufficient time to think about and understand the changes being made in their lives.

Staff recognise that it is important for young people to be able to have a say in things that affect them and there are a number of ways that young people can do this. For example, the home holds weekly house meetings to discuss the running of the home and the accommodated young person's progress. Young people can choose to attend or they can ask staff to talk about particular issues on their behalf. Following the meeting, young people receive the minutes of this meeting, providing them with a written record of the discussion. Additionally, each month, young people can choose to complete the home's 'My Opinion' form, which enables young people to give a written account of their views about their care, the staff and the home's operation. The home also seeks written parental and placing authority views about their satisfaction with the operation of the home and the care of young people. There is evidence to show that staff are able to form positive relationships with young people; this is established by open and frank discussion and the inclusion of young people in relevant decision-making.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people have opportunities on a daily basis to learn and practise their independent living skills, in preparation for their transition into adulthood and independence. The staff encourage young people to complete basic household chores, for example, changing their beds and cleaning their bedrooms. Young people benefit from the good support and advice provided by the staff to help them deal with their emotional and physical development and sexual awareness and relationships.

The home provides young people with a comfortable environment; it is well decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. It is kept very clean and tidy. Young people can choose how they decorate their bedrooms and they have some say in the purchasing of furnishings for the home. The layout of the home is adequate for the accommodation of one young person; it is similar to other nearby properties and is not distinguishable as a children's home.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

This is a very well managed and well organised home. Its management is provided collaboratively by the registered manager and the deputy manager, supported by the registered person. The manager is registered to manage two homes within the company; this arrangement appears to be working well in supporting staff to deliver an excellent standard of care to accommodated young people. The small team of female staff members work co-operatively together; they are all qualified to at least National Vocational Qualification level 3 in 'Caring for children and young people' and are experienced in working with children and young people. No agency staff are employed within this home; any shortfall is covered by other company workers who are known to the young person, thus providing a continuity of care to young people. The registered manager is well qualified to lead the staff team; she provides strong leadership, undertakes the supervision of staff and has good oversight of care practices delivered within the home. A good range of training is completed by staff on an annual basis; all required training is included on a rolling programme to ensure that certificates are in date and staff are kept informed of best practice in child care.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff demonstrate non-discriminatory practice and they ensure that young people have equal opportunities within the community and are not disadvantaged by being in care. The home's policies are regularly reviewed and updated, providing staff with clear guidance about how best to support and care for young people. Systems in place for recording young people's progress are thorough and young people's files provide a full account of their stay in the home. The monthly monitoring processes undertaken by the deputy and registered manager are rigorous and young people's welfare is promoted by the continual drive by management for improvement. Furthermore, the home's development plan focuses on improvement, both in relation to the premises and the quality of care provided. Regulation 33 visits are regularly completed and any recommendation made by the visitor is promptly acted upon to ensure young people are well looked after.

The manager reviews the home's Statement of Purpose on a regular basis to ensure that it accurately reflects how the home operates. It is available to parents, placing authorities and young people. Additionally, young people are given the home's 'Welcome Pack' either on or prior to admission; this provides young people with key information about the home, written in a child-friendly format.

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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Recommendations

There are no recommendations.