

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elaine Cray
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Date of last inspection	17 March 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 to provide care for four young people, of either sex, between the ages of 8 and 18 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It provides medium to long-term residential care and is owned by a private company. The home is located in a residential area that has easy access to local facilities and public transport. The house consists of a lounge, large kitchen-diner, bathroom and staff office on the ground floor. There are four young people's bedrooms, and bathroom on the first floor. There are gardens to the front and rear of the house.

Summary

This inspection is an unannounced full key inspection. All the key national minimum standards have been inspected. Each of the outcome areas has been individually judged as good. The Registered Manager needs to ensure her hours are recorded on the rota and expand the recording format in the home's sanctions book. The overall judgement is that the home delivers a good quality of care to the children and young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There is a written policy regarding searching young people's rooms and young people say this appropriately carried out and written in their records.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The promotion of young people's health and arrangements for medical needs are well-organised. Young people identify significant improvements in their physical and emotional health, and there is a growing awareness by young people of how to maintain healthier diets and lifestyles. Healthy eating is promoted, menus are varied, discussed with young people and include choice. Young people are able to take responsibility for shopping and cooking their own meals, and are encouraged to develop an understanding of healthy eating which also promotes their independence and life skills.

Medical and health records are comprehensive and clearly show that young people's medical appointments are arranged and their health closely monitored. Staff are trained in first aid and administering medication, which is well-managed in the home. Young people say staff are kind and caring when they feel ill.

Young people clearly benefit from the proactive approach to promoting education and awareness to enable young people to understand their own health needs. Liaison with local agencies is very good, providing additional support to young people and consultation for staff, who have an excellent awareness of health issues relating to the lifestyles of young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The safety and welfare of young people is placed in high priority and young people say they feel safe, secure and see improvements in their behaviour. The procedures and practices for promoting the welfare and safety of young people are well managed. Young people are looked after by staff who are trained in safeguarding children procedures. Staff understand the clear risk assessment and management strategies documented for each young person and about the general running of the home. Staff are fully aware of the procedures regarding young people absconding and who to notify about serious incidents in the home.

The home has clear policies and procedures regarding the recruitment of staff which are in line with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and national minimum standards. An audit undertaken by Ofsted in May 2009 identified some shortfalls in practice which the provider has been asked to address.

The privacy of young people is respected and young people enjoy their own private space. There is an anti-bullying policy and strategies are documented in risk assessments and placement care plans. Young people are protected by a clear written complaints procedure with information included in the young people's guide. The manager and staff show a good level of commitment to listening to and ensuring young people's concerns are taken seriously.

There is a written behaviour management policy and procedures and staff are trained in behaviour management and physical intervention. Staff maintain positive and interactive relationships with young people, with a strong emphasis on promoting incentives for and rewarding positive and improved behaviour. There have been no incidents involving physical restraint. Young people say their behaviour is improved because staff are keen to identify and reinforce positive attitudes and set clear boundaries to improve behaviour. Young people are motivated and feel good about the progress they are making. Records are well maintained, but the current format for recording in the sanctions book only requires the name of the staff issuing a sanction and does not include a section for the names of other staff, young people or others present when sanctions are given.

The physical environment is well-maintained and monitored in terms of health and safety, with comprehensive and detailed documentation. Fire safety procedures are checked and monitored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are motivated about their future plans and what they can achieve, both educationally and in terms of preparing for adulthood and employment. Young people develop confidence in their personal identities, social relationships and academic achievements.

All young people's needs are assessed on an individual basis. Appropriate support is afforded to each young person through individual key working sessions and very good liaison with appropriate agencies in terms of more specialised individual needs.

The staff provide a clear and enthusiastic commitment to supporting and encouraging young people to enjoy and achieve in both education, leisure activities and overall personal development. Education facilities, including a school and home tutoring service, are available within the company who owns the home. There are also connections with local mainstream schools.

Although some young people have had poor experiences of the education system, they say they are supported and motivated by staff from the home and the education services to re-engage in education and explore opportunities that will enable them to progress in their achievements and develop skills, and facilitate a meaningful transition into young adulthood. Young people are supported with individual education plans, tailored to their needs, abilities and age and staff provide a clear commitment and flexible approach to exploring ways to best engage young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are looked after by staff who show a good awareness of the young people's needs, which are recorded alongside practical day-to-day care strategies in comprehensive placement care plans. Young people experience significant improvement in their welfare, behaviour and safety.

Young people are supported when they move into the home, saying 'it's best place I've ever lived, the staff were really supportive when I moved in'. Young people receive a young person's guide which is explained with their key worker and there is an admissions check list for staff. Young people settle well, are quickly empowered to understand the reason for their placements and to feel part of the running of the home. There are clear processes to support young people when they leave the home.

Young people feel involved in and consulted about their placements at the home and their plans for the future. Young people read and sign their placement care plans, discuss their needs, views and wishes with key workers and are given the opportunity to attend meetings, including statutory reviews with their social worker. They also make a significant contribution to the home and their placements with regular young people's meetings, key working sessions, which work well, and quality time from staff. Staff place great value on the views and opinions of the young people. Relationships are respectful and relaxed, with lots of chatting and general discussion, ensuring that the lines of communication are open and young people feel able to approach staff and express their wishes.

Arrangements for young people to maintain contact with families and friends are well-recorded and supported by the manager and staff at the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Plans to help young people develop life skills and prepare for more independent living are well supported by the staff. Independence plans are in place and young people say they are encouraged by staff to complete daily domestic tasks, such as washing, ironing and cleaning and they also learn how to budget money, cook their own meals and liaise with agencies in the community. Young people are encouraged to engage with education, employment opportunities and a variety of activities, enabling them to develop confidence and skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being.

Young people live in a well-maintained and comfortable home. The lounge, large kitchen-diner and bedrooms are well-furnished, well-decorated and present a homely environment for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's statement of purpose and young people's guide provides good information about the home. Young people are well-looked after in a home that is well-managed. There are clear lines of accountability with a clear focus on providing and further developing good quality care to young people. Staff understand their roles and responsibilities and feel well-managed and supported by the Registered Manager at the home. The manager completes monthly Regulation 34 checks and the Responsible Individual delegates Regulation 33 visits to managers and deputy managers from other homes within the company. These are carried out on a monthly basis.

Young people are cared for by a small yet experienced team of staff. Staffing includes lone working by staff and these arrangements, which are risk assessed, currently meet the needs of the young people and have developed close and meaningful relationships in a small close knit environment. The rota shows that only experienced staff work alone and there is allotted time for daily handover meetings and regular team meetings. The registered manager works between two homes and although a weekly manager's diary is recorded, the hours worked by the manager in the home are not recorded on the staff rota.

Staff training is well-organised, with an induction package, an annual training plan, with core training such as child protection, first aid and behaviour management and regular staff supervision. The manager also provides a variety of relevant reading material for staff which may be placed in their files for personal use, discussed in supervision or used as an agenda item at the staff meetings. The staff have either completed, or are in the process of completing, National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff team present an openness and firm commitment to assessing and understanding the individual needs of all young people and exploring ways in which these needs can be addressed. The staff team is all female and this meets the current needs of the young people. Discriminatory behaviour and bullying are challenged and addressed. Each child has a permanent and private file, which is comprehensive, well-organised and shows a clear record of each young person's progress.

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
29	include the manager's hours on the staff rota for persons working at the home (Regulation 29.1 - Schedule 4.11).	22 October 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure the names of staff members, young people and any other persons present when giving a sanction are recorded the sanctions book - in addition to the member of staff issuing the sanction (NMS 22.10)