

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	3 June 2009
Inspector	Helen Walker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	21 November 2008
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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 home provides care for up to seven young people, of either gender, aged from seven to 17 years.

The house is detached and set in its own grounds in a residential area near to the town. Public transport links, as well as shops and leisure facilities, are easily accessible. There are six bedrooms for the young people, one of which is a double room. This would be used for siblings. The accommodation also includes a lounge, kitchen/dining room, games room, kitchen and two staff offices.

Five young people live in the home. Four young people were present for part of the inspection and took an active part in the inspection process.

Summary

At this full unannounced inspection, all the key national minimum standards were inspected. The recommendation made at the previous inspection was followed up and details are outlined in the improvement section of this report.

Young people are very well looked after by a consistent, competent and caring staff team. This provides young people with continuity of care throughout their stay in the home. Excellent support systems are in place to give young people advice and guidance in relation to their personal wellbeing. Young people are listened to and have many opportunities to give their views and opinions.

Education is seen as a very important part of young people's lives and is especially well-promoted by staff. All young people attend school, which is the routine and ethos of the home.

A recommendation and action have been made to ensure the young people's welfare is fully promoted. These relate to the effectiveness of sanctions and the maintenance of some parts of the home.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection a recommendation was made to ensure that the results of all statutory reviews are recorded on a young person's file. This information is now available and enables staff to be fully aware of any changes to care plans, thereby promoting the welfare of the young person.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have significant opportunities to participate in menu planning and have staff guidance about making healthy food choices. Young people are offered a well-balanced and varied diet, which is evident from the food provided in the home.

Staff work enthusiastically to support young people to learn to cook and make meals. Mealtimes are particularly social occasions when young people and staff eat at the dining table and discuss the events of the day. Cultural evenings in the home provide young people with an opportunity to sample foods and learn about the culture aspects of different countries, for example, Mexico and China.

Excellent systems in the home help to ensure young people's health needs are well-met. Young people are registered with the usual primary health care services, such as the dentist and optician. This ensures routine health monitoring is in place. Comprehensive partnership working with health professionals is part of the home's holistic work with young people. Strong links with health agencies provide young people with exceptionally good advice and guidance. This includes education about personal health and hygiene matters.

Young people are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle and are enthusiastic about their involvement in different activities. This includes the promotion of physical activities, such as walking, swimming and ice-skating, which benefits their wellbeing. Staff work well with the Looked After Children (LAC) nurse who regularly visits the home to talk about health matters with the young people.

The home has guidance in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medicines. Records are accurate and demonstrate the guidance is effective in practice. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected by staff and written information is stored securely in the home, to ensure confidentiality. Young people have the privacy of individual bedrooms; most use mobile phones and also have access to a house telephone which enables private calls to be made.

The home has a complaints system in place and young people are made aware of this. No complaints have been made by the young people since the last inspection but opportunities exist for them to discuss any matter they are unhappy with. This includes contact with staff, their key-workers and with other professionals, in health and education. Staff have a good understanding about countering bullying and young people confirm there is no bullying in the home at this time.

Staff take all reasonable steps to keep young people safe from harm and know how to respond in the event of any allegation or serious concern about a young person's safety. Child protection training helps staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of young people. Procedures in the home support staff to take the appropriate action if a young person is missing from the home.

Young people receive care from staff who are trained and understand the need to encourage good behaviour. This includes techniques to manage challenging behaviour and the appropriate use of physical intervention. Although sanctions are in place for inappropriate behaviour and monitored by the manager, these are not consistently reviewed to demonstrate they are effective disciplinary measures.

Staff work well with the young people to ensure suitable incentive schemes are in place to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people said consequences are fair and there are ways in which they can achieve rewards for being good.

Systems are in place, to enable young people to be cared for in a safe physical environment. Appropriate checks are carried out in respect of fire safety and the use of electrical equipment and gas appliances in the home.

The manager confirms that the home's recruitment policy is followed for the employment of staff. All staff have relevant checks, including those by the Criminal Record Bureau (CRB), prior to working in the home. This evidences staff are suitable to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have excellent levels of personal support from staff, including a designated key worker. More specialist support from health and education professionals is available, including assistance in respect of smoking cessation.

Young people are enthusiastic about the life story work they undertake with staff. This gives them an informed understanding about their current situation as well as providing tangible memories of living in the home. Opportunities exist for young people to participate in activities they enjoy, including the provision of swimming lessons.

Education is seen as a very important part of young people's lives and is especially well-promoted by staff. All young people attend school which is the routine and ethos of the home. This helps young people with the process of learning, in order to prepare them for adulthood.

Staff provide really good assistance to young people, including help with homework. This supports young people to achieve their potential at school. There is very good liaison with education staff and the home provide transport to and from school as needed. This ensures young people have access to and maintain continuity in educational placements.

Facilities in the home assist the young people's education, for example, the use of a computer with internet access and quiet areas for homework.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have placement plans that identify their assessed needs and promote their welfare. The manager and key worker regularly monitor the plan and involve the young person in this. This means the plans are relevant to the young people's care needs and that staff are knowledgeable about any changes to care routines.

The home has well-established systems to review young people's care. Staff try to ensure review meetings take place at timely intervals but there are occasions when placing authorities postpone or delay them at short notice. Staff are persistent to have the reviews take place as soon as possible, so the young people's care plans do not 'drift'. Young people said that they attend their reviews and feel able to say what they want to in the meetings.

Young people are enabled to make informed choices about contact with family and friends. Although contact is actively promoted, this is done so in line with the placement plans for each young person. Staff are very proactive to enable contact to take place. The promotion of contact means young people continue to have positive links with those that are important to them outside of the home. Young people are particularly pleased they maintain contact with their family.

Good opportunities in the home allow young people to give their opinions about issues affecting their daily life and future. Young people said they are listened to and have a say about aspects of the running of the home, for example, choices of decoration for their bedrooms, menus and activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to learn and develop skills to help them as they move towards leaving care. Good advice and support is given about educational opportunities and practical matters, such as housekeeping, cooking and budgeting money.

Young people are confident and enthusiastic about the skills they learn, particularly cooking and preparing meals. None of the young people are of an age to have a formal Pathway Plan in respect of leaving care. Independence plans developed by the home are discussed with the young people and include information, such as 'stranger danger' to give them an understanding about dangers outside of the home.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation that is decorated and furnished to a good standard. However, the carpet in the hallway, staircase and landing is worn in places and externally the window frames look shabby. This distracts from the overall pleasant appearance of the home. The manager states there is an ongoing programme of redecoration and refurbishment in the home and this includes the replacement of the windows and carpet.

Facilities in the home provide young people with their own bedroom for privacy and include the availability of other rooms, in which to see their family, friends and social workers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's statement of purpose gives full details about the care provided. This was reviewed in November 2008 to update the home's staffing policy. Young people have written and verbal information about the routines of the home so that they are familiar with care practices.

There are good staffing levels to supervise and take account of the young people's known needs. There is continuity in staffing arrangements and a real sense of staff promoting the wellbeing of all the young people. All permanent staff have a relevant childcare qualification to help them in their understanding of caring for young people. The home have a commitment to social work development and practice. Social work students take up placement opportunities in the home.

Young people benefit from being looked after by an enthusiastic, very caring and competent staff team who have a range of experience and a very good understanding of the young people.

To increase staff competency and skills, further training is provided, for example, autism awareness and communicating with young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. A diverse staff group provide positive role models to young people in relation to values and attitudes in life. Young people are treated as individuals and their assessed needs are well-considered. Young people are supported to achieve their potential in all aspects of their life.

There are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home against its statement of purpose, for example, the Regulation 33 monthly visitor report and the manager's report.

Documentation relating to young people's individual history and progress is kept securely and in good order. Young people's files contain all the necessary information for staff to provide them with appropriate care and meet their needs.

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
22	ensure records show the effectiveness and consequences of the use of any sanction or physical restraint (Regulation 17.4).	15 June 2009

Recommendations

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

- maintain the interior and exterior of the home in good repair, in particular the carpets and window frames (NMS 24.3).