

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC005589
Inspection date	17/01/2011
Inspector	Mark Kersh
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	17/06/2010
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 is a children's home that is part of a private organisation. It provides community based placements for up to two young people, of either gender. The home is near to the local town centre and public transport links and leisure amenities are easily accessible. The home has three bedrooms and is situated on a main road. Young people are given information about the services the home provides when they come to the home.

Each young person has a bedroom of their own and the accommodation comprises of a kitchen, two lounges one of which one is used for dining, bathroom and a staff sleeping-in room, which is also the office. There is a yard at the rear of the property.

One young person currently lives in this home and was present during this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service with some strong features. The home provides a friendly, safe and stable environment. This enables young people to make progress in all aspects of their lives, especially their personal safety and emotional development.

Young people are happy and enjoy living at the home. They confirm that they are well looked after and receive good support from staff. Young people are looked after by a settled staff team who are experienced and committed to their work. The staff provide young people with good support to ensure they achieve their goals and that outcomes are achieved.

Two recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection and these relate to education and management.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection the Registered Manager was asked to submit an application to Ofsted for the purpose of registration as a manager. This has not been met as Ofsted have not received the manager's application. This will be carried forward following this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged to take an interest in their health and have access to much information in relation to social issues. Staff along with the information displayed provide good advice on diet and nutrition, personal care and exercise to assist young people develop healthy lifestyles. Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals that cater for varying cultural and dietary needs. Young people confirm they are involved in the planning of meals and say choice is available at mealtimes as well as snacks and drinks outside of mealtimes. Staff and young people have completed training in food preparation and hygiene.

The home effectively promotes young people's health and emotional well-being. Health needs assessments are routine and young people confirm they are registered with local doctors, dentist and have attended opticians. Young people's general and specific health needs are clearly identified and recorded in detail within comprehensive health plans. Staff support and encourage young people's attendance at routine health appointments should they feel unwell. Staff maintain good links with external support services and specialist health professionals. This ensures that young people receive the necessary support with specific issues and that they remain healthy.

Staff fully understand the policy and procedure for medication. Prescribed and non-prescribed medication is stored securely, administered safely, recorded accurately and accountable. Young people keeping and administering their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible to do so, and are able to secure their medication somewhere not readily accessible to other young people. Staff are trained in medication procedures and first aid and this provides them with a good understanding to ensure young people's welfare is safeguarded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and all information in respect of them and staff is stored securely for confidentiality reasons. Young people have individual bedrooms which they personalise and have a key to keep their possessions safe. Staff demonstrate a good understanding in relation to confidentiality and they know how to share information which they are given in confidence for child protection purposes.

Arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected.

All staff working in this home know the importance of taking the views of young people seriously and of listening to and responding to issues raised. The complaints

record book clearly shows staff supporting and advocating on young people's behalf in relation to concerns they raise about their placing authority. Young people know how to complain and confirm they received information upon admission which provides them with useful contact numbers for person's independent of the home. This means young people can raise issues without having to approach the manager or staff.

Young people's safeguarding procedures are good, and staff fully understand and are trained to recognise, respond and report any suspicions of abuse. Staff work well with other agencies charged with protecting young people, advice is promptly sought should any suspicions of abuse arise. Young people say they do not experience bullying inside or outside of the home. Staff regularly meet with young people and encourage them to tell them anything that may be upsetting them, and take appropriate action to tackle any issues should they arise.

Staff know the systems established with local police to report young people if they are absent from the home without authority. There has been a significant decrease in the number of absent without authority reports being logged as a result of staff deploying strategies agreed with police and young people's placing authorities. There are clear arrangements displayed for staff to notify appropriate authorities should a significant event occur.

There is an effective incentive and reward scheme to assist young people to develop acceptable behaviour. Few sanctions are imposed for inappropriate behaviour and records show these to be fair and agreed by young people. There have been no restraints for some considerable time and this reflects on the positive relationships staff build with young people. Comprehensive risk assessments and behaviour management plans are used by staff daily and monitored should any amendments be necessary. These ensure a consistent approach to behaviour is followed by all staff in the home.

Young people live in a safe environment. They, staff and visitors are protected by the procedures staff follow to minimise any health and safety risk. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire evacuations, to ensure the premises are safe and secure. On arrival visitors are asked to sign in and are advised of the fire evacuation procedure and assembly point.

The recruitment and selection of staff working at the home is thorough. There have been no new staff employed for some considerable time. The manager ensures current staff are suitable to work with young people and vetting checks are carried out in line with current legislation.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff see young people in a very positive light and are committed to supporting them when they are anxious or upset. Staff are knowledgeable about young people's

individual behaviours and are good at talking to young people to offer suitable advice and reassurance. Young people confirm this and say they meet regularly with staff. Key worker records demonstrate a good focus on how young people reflected on and viewed their experience at the home. Young people have access to person's independent of the home for advice and support.

Young people's education is not sufficiently well planned for. There are current issues with the distance of schools young people attend. As a result some work is being provided to the home for young people to complete and some education is being provided at the home, however this is insufficient particularly when young people are preparing for their exams. Staff have supported young people to challenge their placing education authority in order that suitable arrangements are made for young people's educational needs.

Young people are encouraged to develop their social skills and confidence by actively being supported by staff to take part in leisure activities at the home and in the wider community. For example young people enjoy a wide range of activities such as horse riding, ice skating, cinema and dining out at restaurants. There are sufficient funds to ensure young people can carry on their preferred interest and hobbies.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have clear written placement plans which are updated regularly and are used by staff daily to work with and identify any changing needs young people may have. Written records show good chronologies and are clear and concise and provide a good account of young people's progress, experiences and achievements to date. Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. They confirm they are consulted and contribute to their statutory review process. They feel confident to raise issues at review which affect their lives, for example, requesting suitable education provision.

Staff actively ensure young people have suitable regular contact with their families and that the arrangements promote and safeguard young people's welfare. During instances when contact breaks down staff liaise with families ensuring the contact arrangements are re-established and constructive. Young people maintain links to significant people in their lives where distance prevents them from visiting. This is achieved through e-mail and telephone contact.

Where possible arrangements for moving into the home are planned, giving young people an opportunity to visit, meet staff and other young people and to receive information about the services the home provides. When emergency admissions occur planning meetings are arranged in line with statutory timescales to ensure the placement can meet the needs of young people. Staff take all reasonable steps to ensure young people who are moving on from the home do so in a planned way.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Independence programmes within the home are well established for those young people at an age where preparation in to adulthood has commenced. All young people regardless of age are encouraged to be involved in the daily running of the home. They are responsible for keeping their bedrooms tidy, do their own washing, go shopping and prepare meals with staff and keep the home clean.

Following a period of closure for the purposes of refurbishment the home is decorated and furnished to a good standard, which provides a comfortable and safe environment for young people to live in. It is homely in appearance and reflects the likes, interests and personality of young people living there. The home is clean and well maintained. Suitable locks provide privacy when bathing.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and reflected within the home's Statement of Purpose document and children's guide. Both of these documents are available within the home. Young people receive a service designed to meet their diverse needs, as is evidenced by the detailed level of care planning and the response to individual need. All staff have a good knowledge of the needs of young people they are working with and where necessary, expertise is called upon from other resources, such as health professionals. Young people are made aware of the celebrations and festivities of their own and other communities.

Staff have a thorough knowledge of the young people they are working with and demonstrate this well. This ensures young people's needs are consistently met. Young people are looked after by a competent staff group who have a good range of skills and experience. Staff are supported themselves through regular supervision and team meetings and the manager receives support from senior managers within the organisation. There is a staff training programme offering a good range of training and this provides them with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs and meet the needs of young people accommodated.

A development plan is in place and this is clearly linked to the monitoring of the quality of care in the home. Each month a person independent of the home visits to seek the views of young people, their families and staff about the service the home provides. Following each visit a report is sent to the home, detailing any shortfalls identified for action to be taken. The manager monitors the administration of the home each month to ensure what staff record they record well.

The manager has the relevant experience and has completed a professional qualification relevant to working with young people. The manager has obtained an application to apply to Ofsted for Registered Manager status. The manager is fully

committed to providing support to staff and places a strong emphasis on improvement.

Staff produce clear records of young people's lives and there is accountability in their practice. Young people have access to the information written about them and their case files give a good account of their history and progress of their time spent in the home.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure each child is given full access to educational facilities as appropriate, wherever feasible and in line with the child's age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (NMS14.3)
- ensure an application for a Registered Manager is submitted to Ofsted. (NMS 34)