

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	11 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 and accommodation for up to two children aged from eight to 17.

The home is situated on a main road with access to public transport, health, shopping and leisure facilities. It is a detached property surrounded by gardens.

Downstairs there are two lounges and a kitchen diner. Upstairs there are two bedrooms, bathroom, a staff sleep-in room and office which doubles up as another staff sleep-in room.

Two young people currently live there.

Summary

This inspection was a full inspection to judge how the home supports the young people living there. All of the key standards were inspected.

Young people have good health care plans in place, outlining how the home will support them with their health care needs. This includes ensuring that all young people are registered with appropriate health care professionals. Support to continue with their educational needs is positive and staff are aware of the importance of enabling young people to develop additional skills to prepare them for adulthood. These include budgeting, cooking and developing a range of daily living skills. Opportunities to access leisure facilities are provided enabling young people to have a range interests and use of community recreational facilities. They are also encouraged and supported to be involved in planning for their future and access to independent advocates and Children's Rights representatives is made available.

The staff team at the home has had a period of change including additional staffing being provided by agency staff. This has now been resolved and continuity provided by a staff team for the home. The manager has submitted an application to Ofsted to be the registered manager and this is being processed. The manager has a development plan in place for the home and improvements made at the last inspection have been sustained and built on.

The home is showing some signs of wear and tear in décor and furnishings and although plans are in place to address this there is not a clear timescale in place.

External monitoring of the home is now completed on a monthly basis and the manager is provided with a monthly report detailing any actions that need to be addressed to provide a consistent level of care and support to the young people living there. A Copy of this report is also made available to Ofsted in accordance with the Children's Homes regulations 2001.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection a number of actions and recommendations were made to ensure that the safety and well being of the young people was effectively promoted. This included ensuring that appropriate storage facilities were in place for confidential information. Lockable

cabinets are now in place. The complaints procedure needed updating and this has now been completed, along with a number of the policies and procedures that the home uses.

Bullying has previously been an issue in the home and although staff are aware of issues regarding bullying further training is planned to ensure that all staff have in depth knowledge of the different forms of bullying and how to provide a consistent approach to counteract this.

Staffing levels at the home have changed and a consistent staff team is now in place. Further recruitment of staff is ongoing to enable a greater flexibility within the staff team.

Information required regarding recruitment and experience of staff is ongoing. The manager has commenced individual staff files to enable information to be available at inspection. This work has not been completed therefore the action has been made again and will be inspected at the next inspection.

Regular external and internal monitoring is taking place and a record of the external monitoring findings are provided to the home. A copy of this is also provided to Ofsted.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Individual health care plans identify health care needs and how these needs will be met. Young people are registered with health care professionals and records are maintained of appointments and any specific outcome from these appointments. This ensures that individual health care is kept under review and staff at the home are aware of any changes in health to enable them to provide the appropriate support to the young people. Where specialist health care support is required, for example Children's and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) the home ensures that this is referred to the appropriate specialists.

Medicines are stored safely and administration records are kept. The records demonstrate that when a young person has refused their medication this is clearly recorded. Non prescribed medication is also recorded although the dosage is not always completed clearly and the reason why the medication has been provided. This does not ensure non prescribed medication is monitored as effectively as prescribed medication for the young people. Parental permission for the administration of medication and first aid treatment is gained and when a young person is subject to a care order permission is recorded by the placing authority and this is clearly evidenced on individual care files.

Young people are involved in the planning of the menus. The home promotes healthy eating advice, although young people do not always follow this. Staff undertake the food preparation and encourage young people to develop their knowledge and skills in budgeting, planning and preparing food as part of preparing for independent living.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The home ensures that all information regarding the young people is stored securely to maintain confidentiality. The privacy of young people is also respected. Procedures are in place to ensure that if a young person's room needs to be searched then this is completed appropriately.

Although there have been no room searches undertaken since the last inspection, all staff are aware of the procedures to follow.

The complaints procedure is known to young people and staff. Complaints are responded to within agreed timescales and records maintained of the complaint and the action taken. Staff have been trained in child protection and know how to raise concerns about young people who make allegations or disclosures. Good liaison is maintained with the local safeguarding team and the police protection unit so that young people's safety and well-being are promoted. Young people looked after at the home are extremely vulnerable and place themselves at risk in the wider community. Serious incidents are recorded and action taken to reduce their likelihood of happening again. Risk assessments are kept under review to ensure that the safety and wellbeing of the young people is monitored and promoted.

The home notifies Ofsted of significant events in accordance with the requirements of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. However, some of the notifications do not contain sufficient detail to demonstrate the response that the home has made to the significant event to promote the well-being and safety of the child. This information is contained within the daily logs for the young people.

The home continues to promote a home where bullying is not acceptable. There have been incidents of bullying but staff at the home have supported the young person being bullied and addressed issues with the young person instigating bullying. Staff are aware of the importance of being vigilante to ensure that all forms of bullying are addressed. However, further training for staff regarding bullying is planned to ensure that all staff are aware of the different forms that bullying can take place in.

Behaviour management plans are in place for young people and these are reviewed to ensure that a consistent level of support is provided to the young people. Sanctions made are recorded and are appropriate although the views of the young people regarding these are not consistently recorded or the reason established why a young person does not wish to express their views. All staff have received training regarding physical intervention. The number of interventions have decreased in recent months. This is due to ongoing support provided by staff to young people to enable them to effectively manage their own behaviours. The home ensures that risk assessments are in place if a young person is absent from the home without authority. All staff are aware of the procedure to follow to minimise the risk and what actions to take in if this occurs.

The home ensures that regular health and safety checks are completed, including fire equipment tests and fire drills. All staff and young people are aware of the procedure to follow in the event of a fire.

Staff recruitment and selection files are held at the main company office. The manager of the home has commenced staff files to record all information as required under Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. However, these are not complete and the home is not able to demonstrate that all appropriate references and evidence of qualifications of staff are in place to ensure that staff have the necessary skills, experience and qualifications to support the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are supported to re-establish their education, often after poor school attendance in previous placements. They attend pupil referral units, the Care Afloat school, or other forms of alternative education until good patterns can be re-established and they are ready to return to mainstream schooling. Incentive schemes are in place to encourage good attendance. Staff support young people in school where this is required. Staff take young people to school in the home's car. On occasions when the staff on duty are not drivers, alternative transport has not been provided and young people have not attended school. This does not ensure that the educational needs of the young people are met effectively at all times. Home tuition is provided for some young people when they refuse to attend school so that disruption to their education is minimised.

Professional support is provided to young people where this has been identified in placement plans. Examples of this include external advocates to enable young people to have their wishes and views represented with regards their future care. Young people are encouraged to attend a range of activities outside of the home and to pursue their own interests. Leisure plans are developed with the young people on a weekly basis, although sometimes these plans change and there is a lack of clarity why. This can impact on the behaviour of the young people who say that on occasions they feel bored. This is being addressed by having a continuity of staff to ensure that plans are completed appropriately and that young people are supported in the implementation of the leisure plans.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Wherever possible, admission to the home is on a planned basis. On admission, young people receive a welcome pack that includes a young person's written guide to the home. Consideration is given to the young person already in placement before a new young person is admitted to the home. Social workers and the manager are involved in decisions about the placement and a matching report is drawn up.

Written placement plans are drawn up at the point of admission and outline how young people's assessed needs are to be met within the home. This includes their diverse needs as well as cultural, religious and identity needs. There is sometimes a delay in obtaining all relevant information from placing authorities, even for planned placements. Young people are invited to attend their statutory reviews and where they decline, staff ascertain their views and represent them at the review meeting. This ensures that young people's views, wishes and feelings are heard and taken into account.

The home operates a key worker system and this has been further developed since the last inspection. Contact with families and friends is promoted where this is in the best interests of young people and in accordance with the local authorities' plans. Telephone contact is enabled and visits are arranged. Email contact is restricted because young people have put themselves at serious risk through misuse of the internet.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop skills to prepare them for adulthood. This includes being involved in some daily chores within the home and being responsible for keeping their bedrooms tidy. Staff support young people to develop budgeting and cooking skills.

Sufficient funding is made available to enable young people to participate in a wide range of activities and they are encouraged and supported to pursue their interests and develop relationships with their peers. The records for pocket money administration have been reviewed to ensure that they are transparent and that the young person understands the level of pocket money that they have received.

The home has a maintenance and décor budget in place. Staff are responsible for ensuring that the home remains comfortable for the young people. However, there have been several doors replaced that require redecorating and the general décor of the home is showing signs of wear and tear. Staff are also responsible for the maintenance of the extensive grounds and this can be time consuming. To the rear of the property, there is a plot of land where previously chickens and animals were kept. The home no longer has these and the plan is to develop this area to provide additional play area for the young people.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a statement of purpose in place that outlines the services that are provided to the home. Further updating is planned to reflect the change of staff that has occurred in the recent month. There is a children's guide in place that outlines what the home provides for young people. A copy of this is provided on admission to the home.

The manager of the home has submitted an application to Ofsted to be the registered manager and a formal interview is in the process of being arranged. The manager has implemented a number of changes to the home to ensure that staff at the home have the necessary support to provide a consistent service to the young people living there. There has been a period of change of some staff but a consistent staff team are now in place. Further plans are in place to increase the level of staffing to provide greater flexibility within the home to support young people. Staff meetings are held on a regular basis and are used to discuss issues regarding the young people and the home as well as providing some ongoing training and development for staff. Staff receive supervision on a one-to-one basis although the length of supervision is not clearly recorded on all occasions.

Staff at the home have the necessary experience, skills and qualifications to provide support to the young people. There is an ongoing training and development programme in place.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people's diverse needs are considered as part of placement planning and the home strives to provide opportunities and support to each young person in line with their identified needs and wishes.

The manager monitors the operation of the home and introduces changes where shortfalls in practice are evident. This means that the service to young people is improving. Records of the provider's visits to the home to monitor the service are forwarded to enable the home to address any shortfalls identified. Copies of this document are also supplied to Ofsted on a monthly basis.

Children's files are maintained to a good standard and where there is information outstanding from the young person's placing authority, the manager ensures that this is followed up via letter. This enables the service to have a good understanding of the overall needs of the young people.

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
20	ensure that notifications of events listed within Schedule 5 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 are detailed and notified without delay to Ofsted (Regulation 30(1))	19 November 2009
30	ensure that, having regard to the number and needs of the young people accommodated, there is a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced staff working at the home to meet the needs of the young people (Regulation 25)	31 December 2009
27	ensure that full and satisfactory information is available in respect of each of the matters referred to in Schedule 2 prior to new appointments to the home's staff team, including the manager (Regulation 8)	31 December 2009
18	ensure that staff have the necessary skills to counter bullying (Regulation 27 (4) (a))	31 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that when non prescribed medication is administered, a clear record is maintained of the reason why this medication was administered (NMS13.2)
- ensure that the record of supervision for all staff details the length of the supervision provided (NMS 28.2)
- ensure that when a young person returns from a period of absence without authority that they are given the opportunity to see someone independent of the Home (19.4)
- ensure that the home is decorated and furnished to a good standard for the children and young people living there (NMS 24.2)
- ensure that a written record of supervision is maintained that clearly reflects the date, time and length of each supervision held for each member of staff (NMS 28.4)