

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	8 February 2010
Inspector	Margaret Lynes
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	2 September 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 accommodate up to five young people. The Statement of Purpose specifies an age range of 12 to 16 years old on admission, with the specific intention of providing an assessment service. This will be for a maximum of 16 weeks.

The home is a detached property with a large garden situated in a residential area close to shops, amenities and public transport.

One young person was involved in the inspection process.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection at which all relevant key standards were inspected. This is a satisfactory service with some good outcomes, particularly with regard to the standard of accommodation and the input and training of staff relating to medication and promoting a healthy lifestyle. There was a lack of clarity and full understanding from staff regarding the assessment tool being used.

The inspection has resulted in five requirements and six recommendations. The requirements relate to fire and gas safety; staff supervision; care plan reviews; and the recording of episodes of restraint. The recommendations concern the provision of an independent person; displaying a valid insurance certificate; minor repairs to the premises; national vocational qualifications; reviewing the assessment tool; and evidencing that staff have read the home's key policies and procedures.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the first key inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. The home employs a housekeeper who prepares the majority but not all of the meals, to enable the young people to develop skills in cooking. They are also encouraged to menu plan and assist staff with the shopping. The kitchen/diner is pleasant and provides adequate space for the young people to eat meals with staff. During the inspection a young person was observed to be enjoying baking cakes with a member of staff. Meals observed and sampled during the inspection were well prepared and appetising.

Each young person is provided with guidance, advice and support, appropriate to their needs, in relation to a healthy lifestyle. Staff can refer to policies and procedures regarding health and social issues, including drugs, alcohol and substance abuse. Young people are encouraged to partake in physical exercise, and can make use of gym equipment at the home. Where a young person has specific health needs, these are incorporated into the care plan. Appropriate records are kept of all health-related appointments, accidents and illnesses.

All care staff have received training in medication administration. No young people had been prescribed medication at the time of this inspection. Nevertheless, appropriate recording systems are in place if this should arise. Staff are keeping up-to-date records relating to the administration of homely remedies. Agreements from placing authorities to the administration of medication and emergency treatment are on record. All staff have undergone training in first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected and information about them confidentially handled. Their files are securely stored in the staff office. Each young person has a key to their room, and there are appropriate locks on the toilets and bathroom.

There is a complaints procedure in place, and young people are made aware of the process for complaining through the young people's guide. There have not been any recorded complaints from the young people since the home opened. One complaint has been received from a neighbour. This was dealt with appropriately. Community police officers commented that the home has made considerable efforts to engage the local community in a positive manner.

The welfare of the young people is promoted. Staff are guided by in-house policies and procedures, which are supplemented with a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. There has been one safeguarding incident since the home was registered. This was dealt with appropriately and Ofsted was notified. All staff have received training in safeguarding.

Staff make it clear to the young people that bullying is not acceptable. There are posters on display around the home, and there is guidance for the young people in their house guide. There have not been any recorded incidents of bullying to date.

Reports are made of all episodes where a young person is absent without permission. Staff are recording the action taken once it is known the young person is absent, and the steps staff take once the young person has returned. At present the young people do not have access to an independent person with whom they could discuss possible reasons for being absent without permission. Staff are aware of, and do not exceed, the measures they can take to prevent a young person leaving without permission.

Staff were observed to adhere to appropriate boundaries and to positively criticise unacceptable behaviour. There are clearly written policies and procedures which provide guidance for staff on permissible control and disciplinary measures. Sanctions are appropriate to the age and understanding of the young person, are consistently applied, and accurately recorded. Episodes of restraint are also recorded but are not specific enough in detail. All staff have been trained in de-escalation and restraint techniques.

The young people and staff are enabled to live in a home which is generally safe and secure. Risk assessments are in place, including a fire risk assessment, and these are regularly reviewed. Substances that are hazardous to health are securely stored, and staff are provided with data safety sheets relating to each product. Fire fighting equipment and the fire detection system are regularly maintained; however fire alarms are not always being tested weekly. Fire drills are carried out monthly. Electrical equipment testing is up to date. The home was not displaying a current insurance certificate, and the maintenance of gas equipment is overdue.

The young people are protected through a robust recruitment procedure. The files inspected contained all of the required information, although there was insufficient evidence to indicate that all references were verified.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people are able to pursue their particular interests and are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in leisure activities. They are supported to take controlled risks, appropriate to their age and understanding, and individual risk assessments are in place. These are regularly reviewed.

The young people are given individualised support in line with the information provided by placing authorities. They each have a key worker although they can approach any member of staff with personal concerns.

As the unit's remit is to provide a 16 week assessment service, any requirement for specialist external services would be resourced once the assessment had ended and the young person had moved on to their next placement. As mentioned earlier in this report, the young people do not at present have access to an independent person. The manager gave assurances that this would be rectified as soon as possible.

The education of the young people is actively promoted by staff. One of the stipulations of accepting a referral is that the young person will engage in education. The home will either maintain a current educational place, if feasible, or will arrange for in-house tutoring. An appropriate education plan was seen on the young person's file inspected. Staff were observed to be encouraging and supportive.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Placing authorities are expected to complete a detailed referral form which will then inform the care planning process. Staff in the home create a four part placement plan for each young person. It consists of: the initial referral; a review plan which is based on the Every Child Matters outcomes; a daily living plan; and a goal plan. These plans are monitored by the key workers. Key workers also carry out weekly sessions with their key child. These sessions are recorded, although the extensive filing system in the home proved to be challenging when trying to find the reports during the inspection process. The young people are encouraged to partake in the planning process and are asked to sign their plans. The planning process is detailed but it is not clear how the plans inform the assessment process.

Staff review the plans on a regular basis. The in-house policies correctly identify the need for plans to be updated on a regular basis so that they can be utilised in the assessment. Staff were not always updating plans in line with this policy. The young people are encouraged to take part in their statutory reviews, and staff will pursue placing authorities to try to ensure that these take place when they should.

The young people are provided with practical support to help them maintain constructive contact with parents, family and significant others. Good records of all contact are being kept. Staff will supervise contact where this is deemed appropriate.

There are procedures for introducing a young person to the home. Placements are expected to be planned. A lengthy and detailed guide is given to each young person on their arrival. They are encouraged to bring in favourite items and to personalise their room. Due consideration is given to referrals to ensure that they will not have a negative impact on the existing group of young people. It is made clear to each young person at the beginning of their placement that their stay is time limited, and that they will move on when the assessment has been completed.

The opinions of the young people are sought over key decisions, and there are systems in place for doing this, including regular house meetings, key-working sessions and informal daily chats. The views of the young people on day-to-day matters affecting the home are ascertained on a regular basis. Parents and placing authorities are also canvassed for their views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is purely an assessment unit and as such is not seeking to prepare any young person for leaving care. Nevertheless staff incorporate teaching age-appropriate independent living skills into the care provided on a daily basis, and the young person's abilities in this regard are included in the assessment report.

The young people live in a pleasant environment which provides sufficient space to meet their needs. Each young person has their own, individually decorated bedroom, which they can personalise as they wish. With a few exceptions furnishings are in good repair. One bedroom is without a bed at present, while the wardrobe in one room had broken free of the brackets securing it to the wall. The lounge door is damaged, however, a replacement is already in hand. Defunct brackets on the bathroom wall pose a health and safety risk. The communal areas are well furnished and comfortable. There is a separate IT/activity room, and the garage is fitted with gym equipment and an ice hockey table. There is a large rear garden with a trampoline.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose and a young person's guide which set out the aims and objectives of the home. The statement is not explicit enough regarding the assessment tool that is in use and what the intended purpose of the assessment is. The young people's guide is very lengthy, albeit it is informative and provides the young people with a clear outline of what to expect from the home and the staff, and also what will be expected of them.

At present the number of staff with a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) is below the 80% recommended in the national minimum standards. Three staff have recently commenced a course and the manager stated that once new staff have completed their probationary period they will also commence an appropriate NVQ course. There are clear arrangements for staff to deputise for the manager, and the staff rotas allow sufficient time for handover. Staff confirmed that the disciplinary procedure makes it clear that they could be suspended pending an investigation into an allegation of abuse.

Staffing levels are adequate at present. There are two staff on each shift, including two at night, one of whom is waking and one sleep-in. The manager is also on duty during the week.

Staff receive training and development opportunities that help to equip them with the skills needed to meet the needs of the young people in their care. There is an induction programme for all new staff, and staff commented that they had found it thorough. Staff have received a considerable amount of training since the home opened including safeguarding, food hygiene, first aid, medication, fire, health and safety, equality, behaviour management and care planning.

There are comprehensive policies and procedures; however, staff are not always signing the sheets to indicate that they have read them. Staff receive regular supervision but not at the frequency recommended in the standards. Staff commented that the home was a good place to work, with great peer support. They would like to be more involved in the assessment process and they were not completely clear about the tool that was being used.

The home is visited monthly, in line with Regulation 33, and reports were available. This inspection coincided with a visit by the Regulation 33 visitor. She provided positive feedback about the home, the way it was managed, and the service it provided. The Registered Manager carries out a monthly audit in accordance with areas set out in Schedule 6 of the regulations. Currently the assessments produced are purely observational and do not contain any critical analysis of the findings. A quality assurance audit of the assessment tool and process has yet to be performed.

The young people's files are in keeping with the standards and regulations. Each young person has two files which between them contain a wealth of information, although for staff it was not always clear where they could find information or where they should file documentation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The staff team is very diverse, and staff have undertaken training in equality and diversity. Care planning takes into account religion and race issues and dietary 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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
22	maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of measures of control used, as set out in Regulation 17, including the length of time of each restraint (Regulation 17)	9 February 2010
26	ensure fire alarms are tested weekly and that this is recorded (Regulation 32)	9 February 2010
26	ensure that all gas appliances are serviced at regular intervals (Regulation 23)	28 February 2010
3	undertake regular reviews of each child's placement plan, in line with the in-house policy (Regulation 12)	28 February 2010

31	ensure staff receive regular supervision the frequency of which is in line with the national minimum standards. (Regulation 27)	28 February 2010
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Recommendations

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

- provide details of an independent person whom the young people can contact if they wish (NMS 19)
- ensure that a valid insurance certificate is displayed at all times (NMS 26)
- ensure that sufficient staff have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3 so that the levels recommended in the standards are met (NMS 29)
- remove the defunct brackets from the bathroom wall (NMS 23)
- ensure that staff are familiar with the home's policies and procedures and that this can be evidenced (NMS 31)
- further develop the assessment tool so that it results in an assessment that includes a critical analysis of the findings and not just an observational report. The Statement of Purpose needs to be amended to better reflect this tool. (NMS 1 and 33)