

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sharon Lewis
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Date of last inspection	10 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

This is a privately run children's home. It provides accommodation and support to four young people, of either sex, aged between 11 and 18 years old. The home is registered to care for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. In addition for young people with a mild mental disorder. The home is situated in a residential area, close to shops, transport networks and local amenities. At the time of this inspection one young person had recently moved into the home. This young person did not provide feedback.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a sound service with many good features. The organisation has a history of providing a professional service. Young people receive support from a stable, competent and experienced staff team. The organisation is a centre of learning. There is a commitment to staff training and influencing future social work practice. Young people benefit from good individualised support. Staff highlight young people's strengths and engage well with them. The home works in partnership with external agencies. Staff regularly evaluate their intervention and aim to provide a quality service.

There are two shortfalls. These relate to flooring in one of the bedrooms and evidence of food hygiene training. Recommendations are made to further enhance the service. Young people's files do not have a record of medical consent and a photograph. Staff do not record fire safety discussions. There is no record of staff training.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The organisation has a good history of complying with regulations. At the last inspection there were no actions or recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The home appropriately promotes the health and well-being of young people. Young people enjoy the freedom of preparing their own menus and purchasing food of their choice. Each young person receives a weekly food allowance. Staff accompany them to purchase items. Young people have the responsibility of preparing their own meals with staff supervision. Young people receive encouragement to eat healthily. Information regarding leading a healthy life style is also on display in the home. Staff appropriately maintain food hygiene, although a copy of the certificates were not available.

Young people's files detail their specific health needs. Health plans cover a wide range of emotional issues which include love deprivation and isolation. The home is able to meet the needs of young people with mild mental health disorders. Staff receive relevant training to manage these issues. All staff are also first aid trained. A nurse is also represented on the staff team. It is usual practice for young people to register with a local surgery. If this is not

immediately possible staff accompany young people to walk-in clinics. Young people receive guidance on health issues during their key work sessions.

The home has a locked medication cabinet in the staff office for secure storage. Staff appropriately maintain medication records. This includes undertaking daily audits. The only issue relates to the obtaining of written consent to administer medication and first aid. The home is still awaiting a written response from the placing authority. Usually this information forms part of the agenda at the initial planning meeting.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people live within a safe environment. The home has a range of policies and procedures which cover health and safety matters. The home's core values include respect, honesty, trust and a commitment to young people. Staff are professional in their role and preserve the privacy and dignity of young people. Staff securely store young people's personal information. Staff understand and appropriately maintain confidentiality. The home has an appropriate complaints policy. Staff provide young people with a list of persons and agencies who can assist. This includes children's rights organisations, their local councillor, ombudsman and Ofsted.

Safeguarding young people is one of the home's priorities. Staff receive relevant training at least twice a year. The home's owners have links with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. This enables them to keep up-to-date on current issues and participate on their training programmes. Staff demonstrate a good awareness of the child protection procedure and their responsibilities. The home does not have any problems with bullying. Staff recognise the vulnerability of young people. There is an established protocol when young people are absent without authority. This involves contacting the police, social workers and other agencies. Although young people may be missing, staff manage to maintain good telephone contact with them. Staff communicate their concerns in a caring and sensitive manner.

The home has an effective behaviour management system. Young people have individual behaviour plans and risk assessments. These address varied elements of their challenging needs. Plans are practical with action points. They provide a good analysis of the young person's areas of difficulty. Staff continually discuss with young people the consequences of their behaviour. Staff highlight young people's strengths and personal achievements. Recognition of their progress is through the reward and incentive scheme. Since the last inspection there have been no incidents where staff have had to use sanctions or restraint of any young person. Young people respond well to staff's warm communication style.

Young people live within a physically safe and secure building. The home has all the necessary certificates and documentation. Staff undertake daily checks of the premises. There are weekly fire alarm and fire extinguisher tests. On admission to the home staff state they discuss the fire procedures with young people. A written record of this discussion, however, was not available. Young people receive care from a very stable staff team. The majority have been with the company for ten years. Should the situation change the home has a comprehensive recruitment procedure. On entering the home, all visitors sign a designated book. Staff ensure they appropriately monitor all visitors.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from the home's commitment to enhancing their lives. Staff offer young people the opportunity to mature as individuals. Young people receive support to develop a positive personal identity and take responsibility for their actions. On arrival at the home, young people are assigned a key worker. Young people actively participate in their key work meetings. Staff possess good interaction and engagement skills. This enables young people to freely discuss issues affecting them in their daily lives. These include their safety, absconding and their education.

The home promotes the value of education. It is the view that education is an entitlement, which can significantly effect the welfare of young people. Staff aim for young people to fulfil their potential. Staff make introductory visits to schools to meet teachers. This enables effective liaison and a consistent approach to meeting the young person's needs. Staff take interest in the school curriculum and make a note of the relevant coursework. This enables them to provide focused support to young people. It is an asset for young people having teaching professionals on the staff team. Staff work flexibly with young people and assist if necessary with escorting to school. Young people share a computer and a range of books is also available for them.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home works in partnership with placing authorities to effectively meet young people's needs. Staff acknowledge the importance of efficient care planning. Prior to moving into the home staff arrange an initial planning meeting with the allocated social worker and young person. This establishes the intended placement outcomes and the areas of responsibility. Planning meetings also offer young people the opportunity to express their preferences. Staff produce care plans which complement the placing plan. Care plans detail young people's cultural, emotional, social, educational and daily living needs. Staff monitor young people's progress and review their intervention on a monthly basis. This report also contributes to the young person's statutory review.

Young people receive support to maintain contact with their family, friends and professionals. The home takes direction from the local authority regarding contact arrangements. Staff endeavour to establish good working relationships with people who play a meaningful role in the young person's life. Staff send letters to family members to introduce themselves, as the young person's new carers. Staff are also able to facilitate supervised contact. Young people have their own payphone in the hallway. They receive a weekly allowance specifically for phone calls. Young people are also able to use the office phone, to contact their relatives and other agencies.

The home offers planned or emergency admissions. The home's procedures ensure young people move into and out of the home in a professional and sensitive manner. Staff encourage young people to visit the home prior to moving in. This gives young people an opportunity to meet the staff and identify their specific needs. When young people leave, staff produce discharge reports. These provide a good evaluation of the placement.

Young people have opportunities to influence the home's way of working. This starts from the initial planning and admission meetings. Consultation is an ongoing theme. The home highlights

the importance of young people's rights and freedom of choice. The care principles include the wish to nurture the spirit and celebrate their individuality. Staff meet regularly with young people for key work sessions and informal discussions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Encouraging independence is one of the home's key care principles. The home has developed their own independent living programmes. This includes practical skills and the personal development of young people. The aim is to help young people realise their self worth and take an effective role in their communities. The programme focuses on the individual needs of young people. Initial steps involve young people budgeting, menu planning and cooking their own meals. The home provides young people with their own lockable food cupboard to encourage self sufficiency.

Young people live in a large residential property. It blends into the neighbourhood and is not identifiable as a children's home. This is a culturally diverse area. Local shops and amenities are within walking distance. Young people have their own bedrooms. Staff provide them with their own room key. There are three bedrooms on the first floor and one on the ground floor. The home provides young people with their own television and fridge in their rooms. Young people are also able to watch television in the lounge downstairs. Young people have a dining area in the conservatory. They are able to prepare their meals in the fitted kitchen. They can also use the laundry facilities in the hallway. Young people have a choice of two bathrooms. These have a separate shower and bath. The home is clean and comfortable. Furnishings are homely and reasonably maintained. The only issue relates to the carpet in one of the bedrooms. This had burn marks and stains.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has their own website. This supplements the good range of written information for young people, their relatives and others involved in their lives. The Statement of Purpose and the young people's handbook meet regulatory requirements. The home is owned by a couple, who were former foster carers. An outstanding feature of the home is the high level of professionals. This includes qualified social workers, teachers, a nurse and other graduates. Young people benefit from a very stable, competent and committed staff team. Staff numbers and shifts appropriately meet the needs of young people.

Young people receive care from a well supported staff team. The organisation is a learning centre for social workers and holds an Investors in People Award. Having social work students enables the organisation to keep abreast of good practice developments within social care. Staff have the necessary national vocational qualification training. The home also has a comprehensive staff training programme. This equips staff with up-to-date knowledge and skills for their role. The home does not keep a central record of staff training. This makes it difficult to have an overview of staff training needs. Staff enjoy working at the home. They greatly enjoy the training and take great pride in their work.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home is able to care for young people from a range of cultural, racial and religious backgrounds. The home celebrates young people's diversity. Young people prepare their own menus and are able to observe their dietary

preferences. Documentation and care plans address their racial, cultural and religious needs. There is also reference to any disability, health concerns, sexuality and vulnerability. The Statement of Purpose outlines the home's commitment to promoting equal opportunities. Staff receive specific training in equality and diversity. This enables them to effectively work in an anti-discriminatory manner.

The home is continually being adapted to meet the needs of young people. Monitoring systems are available to measure the quality of the care. The annual away day enables them to focus on future planning and review their achievements. The owners are currently producing a new business plan to contribute towards their marketing strategy. Young people's files reflect the progress they are making at the home. Staff highlight young people's strengths. The organisation of files provides easy accessibility. There is a system to monitor documentation and audit young people's files. The latter is a reference point for requesting specific information from placing authorities. Young people's files do not contain a photograph of the young person to assist the police with their enquiries if the young person is absent without authority.

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
24	provide floor coverings in young people's rooms are well maintained (Regulation 31 (8) (b))	1 May 2010
10	ensure there is documentary proof that staff hold current food hygiene certificates. (Regulation 13 (1))	1 April 2010

Recommendations

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

- obtain and retain on the file written permission from a person with parental responsibility to administer first aid and medication (NMS 13.4)
- record fire safety discussions undertaken with young people (NMS 26.7)
- keep a photograph of each young person on their file (NMS 35.2)
- maintain a record of all training undertaken by staff. (NMS 31.4)