

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24 March 2010
Inspector	Deborah White
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	16 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 a large detached house with extensive gardens at the front and back and provides care for up to three young people.

On the ground floor, there is a kitchen and breakfast room, living room, quiet room and music room. On the first floor, there are three large bedrooms and each young person has their own single room. There is also a staff sleep-in room, which acts as the office.

There is a family-sized bathroom and toilet also on this floor. On the second floor of the house, there is an attic room, where young people can enjoy hobbies and activities.

There is easy access to the town centre where there are shops, leisure and transport facilities.

There were two children present who helped with this inspection.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced inspection key inspection was to look at the key national minimum standards and the recommendations from the last visit.

All outcomes areas were looked at. Outcomes for enjoying and achieving and economic wellbeing are good and outcomes for being healthy; staying safe; positive contribution and organisation are satisfactory.

Children feel very positive about living at this home. They feel they are cared for and are listened to. The staff team are committed to doing their best and relationships are seen to be respectful.

The home is good at providing a wide range of activities to introduce children to opportunities to achieve. Educational outcomes are good and the home provides a comfortable, homely environment.

Placement plans do not reflect children's individual needs and monitoring systems to not allow for consultation with children, their parents and placing social workers.

There are three actions and sixteen recommendations arising from this visit.

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 last inspection three recommendations were made to improve outcomes for children.

A recommendation to submit the home's child protection procedure to the Local Children Safeguarding Board (LCSB) for validation is not met. The home have sent the procedure but were unable to show what the outcome of the validation process is. Therefore it is not clear the home's procedure is deemed acceptable by the LCSB.

A recommendation to ensure Ofsted is notified of significant events at the home is met. There have been no reportable events since the last inspection, however, the Registered Manager is

aware of the matters listed in Schedule 5. There are procedures in place to inform all relevant agencies of any notifiable event relating to a vulnerable child's welfare.

A recommendation to display a valid insurance certificate is met in part. A photocopy of the organisation's certificate is displayed but it does not specify the name and address of the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are given a healthy balanced diet and are happy with the meals provided. The kitchen is very well stocked with fresh produce to ensure children have their five a day healthy eating portions. There are ample snacks and drinks available and meals are social occasions. A child said 'The food is very good, we get plenty to eat.'

Children are registered with primary healthcare services to ensure they have regular routine medical checks. The looked after children nurse visits the home to offer independent advice and support, and where children need specialist health interventions, appropriate referrals are made.

Regular training ensures staff know how to safely administer medication. There are adequate records kept of what medicines are brought into the home and children's medication charts are signed to say they get the right medication at the right time.

Written healthcare plans do not adequately reflect children's assessed needs or how these will be met on a day-to-day basis. Where children are responsible for taking their own tablets there are no risk assessments in place to ensure children are capable and competent to manage their medication, and there is no parental consent for the administration of first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children's privacy is respected. Children have their own bedroom and all toilets and bathrooms are fitted with appropriate locks. There are good procedures to advise staff on privacy and confidentiality and staff know the home's information sharing protocols.

Children know how to complain and feel comfortable talking to staff if they are unhappy about anything. There is information to tell children about the complaint's procedure, in the children's guide, but how to access an advocate is not included in the text.

There is no bullying at the home and children know to tell staff if they feel threatened. The information available for children is limited but staff talk about what types of behaviour are unacceptable. Staff know how to look for bullying behaviour but there is no countering bullying risk assessment that identifies the times, places and circumstances where the risk of bullying is greatest.

Children who are at risk of running away are protected by the home's procedure to report vulnerable missing children to the police.

Children are not fully safeguarded by the home's child protection policies. The home do not have a copy of the LCSB procedures available to staff.

Children feel they are treated fairly and know about sanctions. Relationships are seen to be positive and children are very complimentary about how they are looked after.

Records of sanctions are kept but the effectiveness of each sanction is not always recorded to show children are managed in line with their age and understanding. There is no section in the documentation for children to sign and add their comments about how they feel about the sanction used. The registered manager has signed each entry but there are no comments to show the appropriateness of each sanction.

Fire safety measures such as regular equipment checks are in place to keep children safe from fire. Fire drills take place so staff and children know how to respond in an emergency but there are no records to show staff receive regular fire prevention training.

Each child has an individual risk assessment that is updated monthly. Risks are identified and there are strategies in place to reduce harm to children. Although there is a rating scale included for each risk, the current system does not adequately reflect the seriousness and likelihood of each risk factor. Children know they have risk assessments and know they can look at them if they wish.

Children are protected by the home's visitors policy. All unknown visitors have their identification checked and verified. All visitors sign the visitors book to enable the registered person to monitor who comes to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children feel they are very well supported. Relationships with staff are positive and children can talk about their feelings and worries. The Registered Manager has monthly key worker sessions with each child to talk about how they are getting along. A child said 'I can talk to the staff about anything. They are there for us, I think they really care about us.'

The promotion of education is very good. Staff work with children to support individual aspirations and where children are not in mainstream school, they attend a small school that is run by the provider. Children are very positive about attending school. A child said 'School is very good, we do lots of things there, I go every day.'

Children say one of the best things about living at the home is the activities. There are opportunities for children to experience a wide range of activities, and healthy outdoor pursuits are encouraged. Children enjoy regular holiday breaks at a caravan and holiday homes owned by the provider. Individual hobbies and interests are facilitated and there are ample indoor activities for rainy days. A child said 'There is lots to do, I can go to my hobby class and the staff take us on outings and to the pictures.'

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Placement plans do not adequately show children's assessed needs or how these will be met on a day-to-day basis. The home uses a pre-printed format that lists preferred outcomes for children. An audit of case files shows that some of the outcomes and strategies for individual children are identical despite them having very different needs.

The objectives of placements are identified but there are no comprehensive evaluative statements to show that placements are effective. Related outcomes areas are not included in placement plans. For example, outcomes from a child's pathway plan are not integrated within the child's placement plan.

Placement reviews are held regularly and children attend to voice their feelings and wishes. Staff prepare comprehensive reports and attend meetings to support each child. Contact arrangements are discussed and recorded in case files. A child said 'I go to my meetings and I can say what I want.'

All admissions to the home are planned and children have the opportunity to visit beforehand to meet staff and the other children. Great care and consideration is taken to ensure any new child will feel part of the resident group. Children are given information about how it is to live at the home and are made to feel welcome.

Children, parents and social workers are consulted about how children are looked after, but there is no evidence that the registered person regularly consults about the operation of the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pathway plans for children preparing to leave care are in place but they are not reflected in individual placement plans. This means that individual assessed needs are not clearly identified, and day-to-day arrangements to provide children with the help they need to manage in a flat on their own are not adequate.

For example, older children may help with the household shopping and cooking but they are not given a set allowance to budget and plan meals and cook for themselves; which is a more realistic situation for children who will be living independently.

Children live in very good accommodation. The house is spacious and decorated to a very high standard. Furnishings are comfortable and the environment is warm and homely. Children are able to personalise their bedrooms and are happy to show off photographs of themselves throughout the house.

There is a large enclosed garden for children to grow produce, have outdoors activities and play in a safe area. A child said 'I am very happy here, it's a nice house and I like my room.'

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose reflects the services provided to inform parents and placing social workers about how it is for children to live the home. The children's guide includes a summary of the statement but there are no clear written guidelines about how to access an advocate.

Children receive the care they need from competent staff. Arrangements are in place to cover the absence of the manager and staff left in charge of the home have sufficient experience to meet the needs of the children.

Staff and children feel staffing levels are adequate and there are good on-call arrangements to support staff outside of office hours. However, the home's staffing policy is not included in the Statement of Purpose to advise what the minimum staffing levels are.

The systems in place to monitor the home are unsatisfactory. The format used to monitor the home does not make it clear where issues are arising and what actions will be taken to improve outcomes for children. Additionally, the system does not provide for consultation with children or parents to give them a voice in the home's operation.

Each child has a case file that reflects their needs and individuality. All private records are stored securely.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Outcomes from this inspection have highlighted areas where children are not adequately protected. Placement and pathway plans do not reflect individual needs to ensure children get the care they need and the systems to monitor the home do not allow for children to be involved in the home's operation.

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
2	prepare in consultation with the child's placing authority a written placement plan that sets out all the elements listed in this regulation (Regulation 12 (1))	30 April 2010
33	ensure the systems in place to monitor the home provides for consultation with children, their parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (3) (1)).	31 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure the in-house safeguarding procedure is available and has been submitted to the Local Safeguarding Children Board (NMS 17)
- ensure the Public Liability Insurance certificate is available in the home and on display (NMS 26)
- ensure each child has a clear written healthcare plan within their placement plan that includes all the elements listed in this standard (NMS 12.2)
- obtain and retain on file prior written permission from a person with parental responsibility for each child for the administration of first aid (NMS 13.4)
- ensure that children who keep and administer their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible (NMS 13.9)

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- ensure a copy of the LCSB procedures are kept in the home and staff have read these and are knowledgeable about them (NMS 17.2)
 - carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest and take action where feasible to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying (NMS 18.5)
 - ensure the records for disciplinary measures used include the effectiveness and consequences of individual sanctions (NMS 22.9)
 - ensure that where disciplinary measures are used children are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names in the records kept by the home (NMS 22.14)
 - ensure the registered person records any comment on the appropriateness of individual uses of sanctions together with any subsequent actions taken (NMS 22.11)
 - ensure positive steps are taken to keep children safe from the risk of fire that include regular fire safety training (NMS 26.1)
 - ensure risk assessments relating to children estimate the seriousness and likelihood of each individual risk (NMS 26)
 - ascertain on a regular basis the opinions and views of parents about the matters listed in this standard (NMS 8.6)
 - ensure children's pathway plans are consistent with their placement plans (NMS 6.1)
 - ensure the children's guide contains clear information about how to secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 1.3)
 - ensure the home's staffing policy is set out in the Statement of Purpose (NMS 30.2)