

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	25 February 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 children's home that is part of a large organisation. The home provides care for two young people aged between 10 and 17 years old who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. The Registered Manager is also the Registered Manager for two more children's homes run by the organisation. There is always one member of staff on duty which includes sleeping-in cover. However, staffing is flexible and is increased when necessary depending on the needs of the young people. There are on-call arrangements.

The accommodation is a three bedroom semi-detached house and is within commutable distance of leisure and sports facilities, shops and a selection of mainstream schools. The accommodation comprises of a lounge/diner, kitchen and bathroom which is on the ground floor. On the first floor there are three bedrooms, one of which is the staff sleeping-in room and office. Each young person has their own bedroom. There is a front and rear garden.

One young person is currently living at the home and was present for part of this inspection.

Summary

This was a full unannounced inspection. The purpose of the visit is to assess the quality of care provided for young people, in line with statutory requirements. All key standards were inspected and standards 15, 21, 28, and 32 were also inspected. Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving and Economic Wellbeing are judged as outstanding and Staying Safe, Positive Contribution and Organisation are judged as good.

This is a good service with some outstanding features where young people are given support and guidance based on their individual assessed needs from an experienced staff team. One of the main aims of the home is to enable young people to prepare for their adult lives and leaving care. Systems and practices within the home enable young people to take on responsibility for their actions, acquire practical independent living skills and learn how to keep themselves safe. The home is well managed and positive relationships exist between staff and young people which helps young people to feel safe, valued and develop their self-confidence.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions made at the last interim inspection which took place on 25 February 2009.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in an environment where their health needs are seen as important and a healthy lifestyle is promoted. Staff provide a high level of support to enable young people to take on responsibility for managing their own health needs and live healthily in preparation for adulthood. Staff receive a range of training to enable them to support young people including basic first aid, food hygiene, the administration of medication and drug awareness.

Staff actively support and guide young people to eat healthily. When young people leave school, they start on the home's independence programme where they are given a weekly budget which includes money for food. Young people devise their own menus based on their likes and dislikes. Young people are supported by staff to plan, shop and prepare their meals.

The physical, emotional and health needs of each young person are clearly identified and recorded in young people's care records. Staff work closely with other health professionals to ensure young people's needs are met. This includes supporting young people to obtain relevant advice and support from other health professionals and advisory services to ensure their physical and emotional needs are met. Young people are encouraged to make their own medical appointments and they are given support with this from staff where needed. Open and positive relationships exist between staff and young people which enables young people to talk openly about all issues relating to their health including drug and alcohol issues and sexual health matters.

Procedures are in place to ensure that medicines are appropriately handled and stored to safeguard young people's welfare. Appropriate records are kept of medication administered. Where appropriate young people are encouraged to manage their own medication and support is given by staff if needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people live in a safe and secure environment. The emphasis is on enabling young people to develop the necessary skills to keep themselves safe and to take responsibility for their actions in preparation for their adult lives. There are various policies and procedures which inform staff how to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse and promote their wellbeing. Systems and practices within the home enable young people to take controlled risks in a supportive environment which helps young people develop their self-confidence and keep themselves safe. The home has a child protection procedure and has a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures. Staff understand their responsibilities in reporting any concerns which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or abuse. All staff receive child protection training. All significant events relating to the protection of young people at the home are notified to the relevant agencies promptly, which helps to protect young people. Bullying is not tolerated and this is made clear to young people on admission and is regularly discussed at the weekly children's meetings. The home has a copy of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 'Safe from bullying in children's homes'. Clear procedures and practices to deal with unauthorised absence help to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. Risk assessments are carried out for each young person. All relevant agencies are informed and records kept as required. Staff discuss the dangers of going missing with young people when young people return to the home. Young people have mobile phones and they are encouraged to keep in contact with staff when they go out on their own.

Systems within the home and relationships with staff enable young people to raise any concerns they may have in a safe and supportive environment. The home has a clear complaints procedure which young people are aware of. This helps to protect and safeguard young people from the risk of harm and abuse. In addition to the home's complaints procedure details are readily available of other agencies which young people can contact should they have any concerns

including Ofsted. Records of complaints are kept as required. No complaints have been received since the last inspection.

Respectful relationships exist between young people and staff. Young people's privacy and dignity is respected which helps them feel valued. Staff present as positive role models which helps young people develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff are committed to enabling young people to change unacceptable behaviours and develop socially acceptable behaviours in preparation for adulthood and being part of the wider community. Young people are praised for their good behaviour and positive changes in behaviour are recognised and rewarded. Staff are skilled at discussing and negotiating boundaries and guidelines with young people where young people's behaviour potentially places them at risk. Staff successfully reach agreements which do not restrict a young person's freedom and at the same time enables the young person to keep themselves safe. There are a number of reward initiatives in place to encourage positive behaviour and development. The use of sanctions is minimal and restraint is rarely used. Restraint has not been used for a number of years which is testament to the skills of the staff team. Appropriate records are kept of restraints and sanctions.

The management of health and safety is good at the home which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or injury. Staff receive appropriate training in health and safety including fire safety awareness. Equipment and installations are serviced at the required intervals. Fire alarm tests are carried out weekly and regular fire drills take place. The fire evacuation procedure is explained to young people on admission which helps to protect them from the risk of harm and injury.

The home has clear policies and procedures regarding the recruitment of staff which are in line with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and National Minimum Standards. An audit undertaken by Ofsted in May 2009 identified some shortfalls in practice which the provider has been asked to address.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All young people are given a high level of support and guidance from staff to enable them to develop and try and reach their full potential in all areas of their lives. Care is based on individual assessed needs which takes into account their gender, religious, racial, cultural and linguistic needs. Support is provided by a skilled and committed staff team who have an in-depth knowledge of young people's needs. Individual support and encouragement is given to young people which enables them to pursue their particular interests, achieve and develop confidence in their skills. Individual risk assessments are in place in relation to the care of young people and young people are supported to take controlled risks, appropriate to their age and abilities. Risk assessments are reviewed regularly. Staff work closely with a range of other agencies to ensure young people's needs are being met. Young people's educational achievements and leisure interests are well supported enabling them to achieve their potential in learning and social skills.

Education and helping young people prepare for employment is regarded as important by staff at the home. Young people are encouraged and supported to achieve their full potential academically, socially and as part of their development into adulthood. Staff work closely with local education services and young people's education is based on their individual learning needs. Practical and emotional support is given to young people to access further education

courses and seek employment. Young people are expected to actively seek employment where further education is not being pursued including visiting Connexions and job centres on a regular basis. Support is given by staff to enable young people to develop skills in terms of applying for jobs. Young people are also encouraged to apply for part-time jobs whilst studying in further education. Young people's care files contain Personal Education Plans (PEP) and Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) and copies of school reports.

Young people are enthusiastically supported and encouraged to pursue a range of activities based on their individual likes, interests and needs. Appropriate risk assessments are in place.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff work hard to empower young people and systems and practice to enable young people to make positive contributions to the running of the home and their future lives. This helps young people to feel valued, develop confidence and take control of their lives. Weekly young people's meetings are held where young people as a group and individually, have the opportunity to raise any concerns, put forward suggestions and make their views known. Individual key worker sessions are also held.

All young people have files which contain 'looked after children' (LAC) documents, care plans (known as placement plan trackers), risk assessments and case records. Placement plan trackers assess the care of young people under the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. Care records are of a good standard and inform staff how to meet the needs of young people. However, not all placement plan trackers are signed by the young person and key worker. Placement plan trackers and risk assessments are reviewed regularly. Review meetings are held as required and young people attend their review meetings and are able to contribute to their future plans. Minutes of review meetings are kept. Staff work closely with the placing authority and send them weekly progress reports on each young person which helps social workers to monitor if young people are receiving the care they need.

Contact arrangements are clearly recorded to ensure that staff understand each young person's situation with regards to meeting with their family. Staff work hard to support young people to maintain valued relationships and provide both practical and emotional support.

There are clear and established systems for managing referrals and assessments. Placing authorities complete the home's referral form which is assessed to ensure that the home can meet the needs of the young person. The Registered Manager takes into account the needs of the existing young people at the home when considering new referrals to ensure young people's needs are compatible. Staff try to ensure young people are prepared for admission to the home wherever possible to ensure a smooth and supportive settling-in period. Young people are given a copy of the home's 'Welcome' booklet prior to, or, on admission. This gives good information about what life is like at the home, what the young person can expect and what is expected of them. Young people also have the opportunity to visit the home prior to admission to meet staff and young people living at the home. On admission staff spend time with the young person helping them to settle in. This includes going through an induction which gives young people further information about how the home is run, discussion of their needs and explanations of some of the home's policies, for example, the complaints procedure and anti-bullying policy.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The ethos of the home is on enabling young people to adequately prepare for adulthood in all areas of life. Young people receive an excellent level of practical and emotional support from a highly committed staff team. Staff work closely with other outside agencies to enable young people to make as much progress as possible during their stay at the home. Procedures and practice in the home provide young people with realistic opportunities to progress into adulthood. Staff recognise the importance of providing emotional support to young people during the time of transition. Pathway plans are in place and all young people work through the home's independence training programme. Young people are given the opportunity to live on a weekly budget based on the current job seekers allowance which provides a more realistic experience of living independently and what its like to have to manage their own finances. Young people are well-supported with this by staff and young people are expected to do their own meal planning, shopping, cooking and laundry.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation which is decorated and furnished to a good standard. The home is clean and well-maintained. Young people are encouraged and supported to personalise their bedrooms.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose has all the information required in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the practice and registration conditions of this home. Young people are given a 'Welcome' booklet which gives them information about what to expect and what is provided in the home.

Young people receive a good level of care based on their assessed needs from a committed and experienced staff team. Care provided is in line with the aims and objectives of the home's Statement of Purpose and staff work hard to enable young people to achieve their full potential and prepare for their adult lives. Staffing levels are flexible and are based on meeting the individual needs of young people. The home is well managed and staff receive regular support and supervision from the Registered Manager. There are effective and robust internal monitoring systems in the home which help to identify shortfalls in practice, ensure young people's needs are met, help to improve the quality of care provided and help to safeguard young people from the risk of harm and abuse. The Registered Manager carries out monthly Regulation 34 checks, produces an action plan and takes remedial action where necessary. Regulation 33 visits are carried out monthly and reports produced. Staff meetings are held regularly to discuss young people's care, shortfalls in practice identified as part of the Regulation 34 audits, changes in policies and procedures and any new developments affecting the running of the home. Two staff have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People and another member of staff is currently studying for the NVQ Level 3. Staff also receive a range of training to enable them to meet the needs of young people. The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff receive training in Equality and Diversity which enable them to ensure care provided is based on individual's needs taking into account, gender, disability, race, culture, religion and sexual orientation.

Young people's files contain all the necessary information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations, 2001, to inform staff about the needs of young people and how to meet their 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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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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):

- ensure young people are given the opportunity to sign their placement plan trackers. (NMS 2)