

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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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 registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people of either gender. It is owned and run by a private organisation. The property is a semi-detached house, situated on a busy main road. There is good access from the home to public transport facilities and local amenities, such as shops, leisure facilities, schools and colleges.

There is sufficient private and communal space in the home. Accommodation is spread over three floors, with storage and laundry facilities in the basement. On the ground floor, there are two lounges and a dining kitchen. The young people's bedrooms, bath and toilet facilities are on the first and second floors. There are two bedrooms on the second floor, one of these doubles as an office.

There are currently five young people living at the home, at the time of this inspection. Four young people were present and contributed to the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service in most respects with some outstanding features. Young people are encouraged to eat healthily and participate in regular exercise, good health is promoted and significantly enhanced by the services provided to them. Young people know the home's services and how to use them, with key policies explained to them as part of their induction into the home. Young people are protected and feel safe. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the positive relationships that exist between staff and young people, and between young people and their peers. Education outcomes and achievements are excellent with young people making progress. Care planning documentation and records are individualised and detailed in content. Staff are well supported by the management team who have a strong commitment and focus on improvement. However, improvements are needed to the content of external monitoring reports, the completion of all sanction records, consulting with relevant people and staff qualifications.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection the registered manager was asked to ensure young people have access through the front door, which was locked at night, therefore, restricting their liberty. Access is now in place as an alarm has been fitted to the front door, which is activated at bedtime. The recommendation for staff to complete a relevant qualification has been carried forward, following this inspection, as two staff are currently undertaking this qualification. One recommendation related specifically to the previous inspection in relation to risk assessments for bullying; risk assessments are in place with a low risk score.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from good home cooked, well balanced nutritious meals, which offer choice and vegetarian options. The home keeps daily records of menus showing what young

people are actually eating, enabling staff to monitor young people's food intake. This system equally applies for those young people commencing a programme of independence. Young people participate in cleaning rotas, which encourages and teaches food hygiene. Meals meet cultural and dietary needs of individual young people and foods from diverse cultures are prepared or purchased. Clear records show preferences to individual food likes and dislikes and any allergies to food are well documented.

Young people's health matters are managed and monitored exceedingly well. Health outcomes for young people are excellent. Individual health care needs are met through local services and the home maintains good links with specialist provisions. This includes input from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service and clinical psychology. The home has a strong link with the Looked After Children's Nurse who on request will visit the home and provide young people and staff with health advice and guidance. Young people have exceptional information available to them in relation to diet, health and exercise.

Young people are protected and health and safety is promoted through the home's policies and procedures for medication. Trained staff secure, administer, record and dispose of all medication, and where young people are assessed to administer their own medication, lockable secure storage is provided for them within their bedroom. Young people do not have access to other young people's medication. All prescribed and non-prescribed medication is accountable through clear records and robust monitoring systems.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected by staff. Young people say staff always knock on their bedroom door and await a response before entering. Young people have a key to their bedroom and can keep their personal possessions secure. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of issues of confidentiality and know how to share information with other professionals. Young people can make and receive telephone calls in private.

Young people know what to do if they have a complaint or concern about the care they receive in the home. The complaints procedure is explained to them, as part of their induction into the home, and they receive information and have access to complaint forms. The home's complaint system is effective; important telephone numbers, for example, Ofsted and the children's rights service, are clearly displayed within the home. There have been no complaints following the previous inspection.

Staff demonstrate a good understanding of child protection and safeguarding issues and all have completed an appropriate level of training in relation to recognising, responding and reporting abuse. There have been no child protection concerns in the period since the last inspection. Young people confirm good relationships exist between themselves and staff and say bullying is not an issue in this home. Clear posters display definitions of bullying and the impact this has on young people, and young people have made and displayed posters in relation to bullying.

When young people abscond staff know what to do and follow agreed procedures. Detailed records show instances of staff contacting appropriate authorities. Young people being absent from the home without authority is currently not an issue. Records show instances of young people returning home later than the agreed time, or staying overnight at friends; in all events

contact is maintained with young people and they return safely to the home. There has been one significant event following the last inspection, and records show no safeguarding issues and that the home acted appropriately.

Systems are in place to ensure detailed recording and monitoring of sanctions and restraint takes place. Records show there is minimal use of sanctions, and when a sanction is imposed, young people say these are fair. Sanction records include comments on the effectiveness of sanctions, however, this section of the record is not routinely completed, and in such cases the effectiveness of monitoring is not evident. There have been no restraints, rewards are used to reflect young people's good behaviour and staff and young people say relationships within the home are good.

Young people, staff and visitors are protected from risk from fire and other identified hazards. All the required fire safety checks and evacuation tests are completed and recorded at regular intervals and equipment is serviced as required. Written risk assessments are in place, for individual young people, and activities are routinely risk assessed.

Ofsted has undertaken an audit of staff personnel files in May 2009; any shortfalls found are being addressed by the provider. There are no recruitment issues within this home, staff looking after young people are safe to do so. All visitors to the home sign in and out and young people are not left unsupervised with people entering the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent support that meets their individual assessed needs. Staff demonstrate an excellent understanding of young people's individual needs as well as the needs of the group. Where knowledge is lacking staff call upon outside professional agencies to provide advice and support for young people. Care planning documentation ensure the needs of young people are identified individually. Key workers manage individual placement plan trackers of young people they are responsible for and records of regular meetings between key workers and young people show a consistent approach, with personal matters being dealt with in a sensitive manner. Young people meet regularly with each other and staff and say matters they raise are taken seriously and acted on promptly.

Young people's education is fully supported and staff maintain good links with schools, colleges and training facilities. Staff are highly motivated in ensuring young people's attendance, providing support in education, and encourage young people to succeed and reach their potential. Clear records show targets for outcomes in education and training which are significantly enhanced by the support young people receive. Staff recognise young people's efforts and celebrate their achievements.

Young people have exceptional access to a wide range of information within the home which provides information and opportunities to participate in recreational activities within the community as well as in the home. Budgets allocated are sufficient to enable young people carry on with their individual hobbies and interests.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs thoroughly assessed, planned for and reviewed effectively by staff. Written information is current, informative and clear and is monitored and updated regularly. Young people confirm involvement in their plans the home maintains for them and this is evident. Young people's progress is documented and reported to individual placing authorities; this system enables external monitoring of individual placements. Young people's statutory reviews are carried out within timescales and young people are encouraged and supported by staff to attend and express their views. Good methods of consulting with young people exists as part of the reviewing process as well as daily consultations with staff.

Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain appropriate contact with family and friends. Plans and records detail contact arrangements showing this can be facilitated by telephone and visits by young people or by their family to this home. Young people say they are happy with the arrangements for contact and any reason for restriction or supervised contact is recorded and managed sensitively.

Systems are in place to establish at the point of referral the suitability of a placement and any likely impact this may have on the resident group as well as any impact on the referral. Following admission a planning meeting takes place and placement plan trackers are updated to show outcome targets and strategies to achieve these, including any needs arising from cultural or religious needs. Consultation forms are in place to ascertain the views of young people when they leave the home, these forms are also intended for placing authorities and families. However, the home is in the process of attempting to obtain this information, as often forms are not completed or returned.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care and support from staff that enables them to prepare to live independently. Good preparation is in place for this between young people and their key worker, and takes into account individual young people's age and understanding. Independent living programmes are introduced to young people before the school leaving age and allows them to gradually take responsibility for areas of their own care in preparation for adulthood. Young people are involved in a number of areas and carry out practical daily living skills, for example, budgeting, shopping and cooking their own meals, being responsible for laundering their own clothes and keeping their bedroom tidy. Daily living chores are carried out by staff in the home regardless of gender which promotes positive role models with young people.

The home is maintained throughout in good order and the décor and furnishings provide a comfortable environment. Young people have decorated and furnished their own bedrooms which include their own personal possessions. Young people have access to kitchen and laundry areas and assist staff with the upkeep of the home. The home provides sufficient space for young people and washrooms and toilets are sufficient to meet the need of young people and staff. Young people actively contribute, keep tidy and take responsibility for the exceptional pieces of information displayed and available to them throughout the home, some of which has been designed by them.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home's statement of purpose provides detailed information to parents and placing authorities about the services the home provides, and is available on request. This document makes clear the home's commitment to equality and diversity. There is good information for young people within a welcome pack they receive on admission to the home. There is a wide range of printed material available for young people and staff which covers equality and diversity. The home celebrates regular events and festivities all of which are linked to young people's individual diary dates. Staff receive equality and diversity training. Young people's case files and care planning documentation reflect individual needs and differences.

Young people are supported by staff who themselves are well supported by the management team. Regular supervision, team meetings and sufficient time for handover enables effective planning to be in place which provides consistency to young people. Continuity of care for young people is achieved with the staff team remaining the same. Most staff have completed their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3. Staff are provided with good training opportunities in relation to current practices.

The manager has an effective quality assurance system for monitoring the internal administration systems, where shortfalls are identified actions are made to address these, ensuring the quality of the records within the home are of a good standard. Trainee managers carry out unannounced monitoring visits each month and reports are produced, however, these lack detail.

Young people's individual case files are set out well and provide a good account of the services they receive and the progress they make. Young people have access to the information written about them. Young people's achievements, celebrations, participation and pictures in activities and outings are kept in individual keep safe boxes, so as when young people leave the home they can look back on their time spent there.

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
32	prepare a comprehensive report following the visits undertaken on behalf of the registered provider (Regulation 33).	25 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure sanction records are completed as specified within the sanction book (NMS 22)
- ensure the opinions and views of parents, placing authorities and young people are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis (NMS 8.6)

- ensure that at least 80% of all staff have a qualification at NVQ level 3 or an equivalent qualification (NMS 29.5).