

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anthony Kyem
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 February 2010
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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 provides care and accommodation for up to eight young people between the ages of 10 to 17 years. The home is a large, detached house situated within its own grounds. The home comprises of eight single bedrooms, a lounge, dining area, play room, washing facilities and toilets appropriate for the registered numbers. The home is located in a residential area with good access to local amenities.

Summary

This full inspection of the home was unannounced. The visit was used to look at the home's capacity to meet the outcome areas for young people under Every Child Matters. The home is judged to be a satisfactory service, with areas of sound practice.

Young people receive support from dedicated staff. They receive specialist support when they require it. Their health needs are met and all are encouraged to attend their routine health appointments to promote healthy outcomes for them. Young people receive good support with their education, with educational attendance and learning opportunities are positively promoted.

The behaviour of young people, at times, is challenging. The response towards managing challenging situations has occasionally been inconsistent, resulting in an increase in the number of incidents necessitating police involvement. Such incidents have not been reported to Ofsted in accordance with the home's responsibilities to do so. Staff are trained in the use of care and control to help them to manage disruptive behaviours safely. The use of restraint is rare and diversion strategies are used to prevent physical intervention.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There are no actions resulting from the previous inspection. Staff are trained in safeguarding and this is supported by training records held within the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

To ensure the meals provided for young people are enjoyed, their food preferences are considered in the development of the food menu. Young people receive a diverse range of meals, which are healthy, wholesome and nutritious. Healthy eating plans are used with young people to promote healthy eating and the development of healthy lifestyles.

There are appropriate facilities for young people to cook and share mealtimes with their peers. The home is currently having a new kitchen fitted, which has caused some inconvenience by temporarily restricting the types of meals provided. The new kitchen will become fully operational within the next few days.

Young people's health needs are promoted and all are registered with health services locally. Those who require specialist support have access to therapy in addition to other specialist services. This ensures young people receive the treatment, advice and support they need.

The administration and recording of young people's medication is satisfactory. However, medication has not been stored securely to prevent unauthorised access, with there being at least two identified occasions where the medication cabinet has been breached. In the absence of secure medication storage facilities the safety of young people is potentially compromised. As an interim solution medication is now stored within a locked filing cabinet, while alternative storage has been ordered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The security arrangements for young people to wash in private are satisfactory. The home maintains young people's confidentiality by ensuring their private and personal records are securely stored.

The home's complaints procedure is accessible to young people in the form of a guide. The guide contains appropriate information for young people to raise their concerns independently. It contains the contact details for Ofsted, the Local Safeguarding Children Board, as well as advocacy services for young people to refer to.

There were no complaints recorded since the last inspection. However, a complaint was identified which was not recorded. The manager was made aware of this issue to ensure young people's complaints are acknowledged, investigated and resolved.

Young people's welfare and safety is promoted. Safeguarding concerns are brought to the attention of the relevant authorities and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The behaviours of young people are assessed and identified risks are appropriately and clearly recorded. This information helps staff keep young people safe from the potential of harm. Positive behaviour is promoted through the use of targeted incentives and rewards. The use of sanctions is fair and restraints are very rarely undertaken.

Young people's behaviours are managed in accordance with their behaviour management plans. However, there have been identified occasions where police involvement has been requested to promote good order and discipline within the home. This has contributed towards young people's behaviours being potentially criminalised. Serious incidents, which require notification to Ofsted, have not been reported in accordance with the home's legal responsibilities. For example, an accidental fire was not reported.

There is a high percentage of unauthorised absence, despite the strategies used by staff to deter young people from going missing. The home's missing person's procedures are understood by staff and used to promote their safe return. Bullying is not tolerated and staff are vigilant towards bullying behaviours. They are appropriately trained in the use of restraint and they receive refresher training, where required.

The safety and security of the building is well maintained. The external doors are alarmed to protect young people from intruders and to alert staff towards young people leaving the premises unknown to them. Fire, gas and electrical systems are all contractually serviced to promote health and safety. Fire evacuation drills are held frequently, so that young people know how to evacuate the premises safely in the event of an emergency.

Staff recruitment practices were not assessed on this occasion. These will be inspected at the next interim inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive routine advice, support and encouragement through direct work. Key working is used effectively, to explore young people's behaviours and progress. The sessions held cover the outcomes areas for Every Child Matters. Young people engage in key working and they are able to record their views and experiences on sessions held to evidence their participation and contribution towards this process.

The arrangements made to promote young people's education are good. Despite various challenges the home has managed successfully to engage all young people in some of education. Young people receive and benefit from home tuition to provide them with additional support with their development and learning.

Young people are provided with personal educational plans which describe their needs, progress, achievements and aspirations. The home works closely with the National Teaching Advisory Service, with which the home has established effective links, to promote positive educational outcomes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are accurately recorded within their placement plans. These are regularly reviewed and updated in accordance with young people's changing needs and individual circumstances. Their needs, development and progress are summarised each month, with regular progress reports produced for placing authorities. Young people's needs are formally reviewed during their statutory review process. They confirm they are able to attend their meetings; this enables them to influence decisions made about them.

Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain contact with their families. Staff promote contact and they are able to provide young people with supervision, where required. Records are kept within the home which show the arrangements made for young people to maintain contact with those significant to them.

Young people are consulted and their views and opinions are taken seriously. Key working is held to provide young people with individual opportunities to be heard. Resident group meetings are also held but these meetings are held less frequently. This restricts young people from sharing their collective views with staff in relation to the way the home is operating.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The accommodation provided for young people is reasonably well maintained and kept in a safe and satisfactory state of structural and decorative repair. The home provides young people spacious living accommodation. It has a large garden, which provides young people with a pleasant place to socialise and play.

The home is currently having a new fitted kitchen, to provide young people with better standards of cooking facilities. The home is also in the process of having new carpets laid, to improve its internal appearance. Young people have access to a lounge area and there is also a games room and area where young people are able to meet their visitors in private.

Young people are provided with their own separate bedrooms, which they are free to personalise by expressing their own unique personalities. There are sufficient numbers of washing facilities to cater for the needs and numbers of young people living in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home has a written Statement of Purpose and a children's guide, both provide useful information about the home and the services it provides. The statement does not contain any information about staff's individual qualifications and experience. Without this information, the achievement rate of staff, currently qualified to National Vocational Qualification standards could not be assessed.

The home has a robust training programme in place. Mandatory training is provided in addition to more specialised training, which enables staff to develop their knowledge and skills. A wide variety of relevant training has been undertaken.

Overall, stability and continuity of care has been provided, to enable young people to develop and sustain their trusting relationships with the same staff. Where agency workers have been used, the same agency staff are used to promote continuity. The home has recently strengthened the staff team by employing new staff who are experienced in caring for young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The composition of the staff team is diverse and provides young people with appropriate role models. Staff treat young people as individuals and ensure all young people receive fair treatment within the home. This ensures young people receive and benefit from the same experiences and equal opportunities.

The systems in place to monitor the home's performance are inconsistent. Hard copy reports, following independent monitoring visits, were missing for the months of November and December 2009. However, these were available to staff on the home's computer. Reports are currently sent to Ofsted but there is no evidence of a visit for one month.

Managerial monitoring reports, to show the home's administrative systems are checked at suitable intervals, were not available for this inspection. The home continues to operate without a Registered Manager and there has been considerable delay in the manager submitting their completed application.

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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13	ensure there are secure arrangements in place for the safe storage of young people's medication (Regulation 21.1)	18 May 2010
20	notify without delay the relevant persons or agencies of the matters set out in Schedule 5, in particular Ofsted (Regulation 30 & 38h)	18 May 2010
1	include in the Statement of Purpose details of the current staff group, including their roles, individual qualifications and experience (Regulation 4.1)	18 May 2010
32	undertake monthly visits as set out in Regulation 33 and send a written report on the home's conduct to Ofsted each month (Regulation 33)	18 May 2010
33	monitor the matters set out in schedule 6 at appropriate intervals (Regulation 34).	18 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure a written record is kept of all complaints, including the action taken and the outcome (NMS 16.3)
- ensure young people's behaviours are responded to consistently to avoid the need for unnecessary police involvement (NMS 22.4)
- ensure an application to register the home's manager is submitted to Ofsted. (NMS 34.3)