

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18 May 2009
Inspector	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	1 October 2008
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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 children's home is registered to provide care, support and accommodation to five young people of either gender between the ages of 12 and 16 years old. The home is owned by a private provider and is a family run business. The Registered Manager is also the registered provider.

The house has a kitchen/diner, lounge, meeting room, bathroom, five en suite first floor bedrooms and a garden to the rear of the premises.

Summary

The inspection was an unannounced random inspection. The purpose of the inspection was to assess the home against key National Minimum Standards under the outcome area Staying Safe and to gauge the home's success in addressing weaknesses highlighted at the previous inspection. The outcome areas Being Healthy, Enjoying and Achieving, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation were not assessed.

Staff make good efforts to ensure that young people are safe while living in the home. Written guidance and staff practices address issues of privacy and confidentiality, complaints, child protection matters, bullying and the management of young people deemed missing well. The service has effective strategies in place that address behaviour management and the home provides physical safety and security. Staff do not, however, consistently document placement plans on young people's case files.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection had highlighted weaknesses in the issuing of notifications to relevant bodies; the revision of the home's Statement of Purpose document and ensuring that young people consistently receive the home's children's guide. All these issues have been resolved satisfactorily. However, the requirement to evidence documented placement plans for each resident on file is still outstanding.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff help young people remain safe while they are in placement at the home. The service has good staff vetting policies in place; this is important to ensure that young people receive care from staff who are qualified and suitable to meet young people's needs. Currently four additional staff members are in the process of being recruited to work in the home.

The home's premises provide physical safety and security and young people feel very safe while living in the home. Staff are diligent in ensuring that there are sound fire precaution measures in place and they maintain good records that confirm that fire equipment and systems are

tested regularly for faults. The home's fire doors are in appropriate use and staff conduct fire drills routinely. A recent fire authority inspection assessed the home's fire prevention systems as being satisfactory.

The home has extensive behaviour management policies in place and these are well known to the staff group. All existing staff members have received training in physical intervention, however they are encouraged to speak and counsel young people when they display unacceptable behaviour. This ethos is strongly encouraged amongst the staff group and is effective. Staff have imposed no sanctions against young people for a significant period of time as young people respond positively to staff's verbal input in addressing behavioural issues. Staff make use of individual behavioural charts to gauge young people's behavioural patterns, and further encourage positive behaviour through a system of rewards.

Staff and the local police share a good working relationship in the management of young people who are absent from the home without permission. This assists with the protection of young people when they are away from the home. Staff have access to good written guidance; young people are familiar with procedures and understand that the local protocols are in place for their protection. Staff encourage young people to remain in contact with the service by telephone when they are absent and mobile phones are provided for this reason. Joint local procedures are effective; the police visit the home once a young person has been reported missing and will visit again upon the young person's return for discussion with them. Staff keep good records of incidents where young people are deemed missing from the placement.

With regards to bullying, young people indicate that bullying is not an issue in the home. Staff also share this view. The home has comprehensive written guidance in place to combat bullying and provides young people with relevant information via the children's guide.

Young people feel their safety and general wellbeing is of paramount importance to staff of the home. There have been no reported incidents of a child protection nature since the last inspection. The staff group have access to comprehensive child protection and safeguarding guidance which is supplemented by ongoing training in this area of staff's work. Staff have recently participated in local authority training focused on safeguarding which incorporates NSPCC literature and materials. The home's written policies are clear about the involvement of the police with regard to allegations and more general incidents. Staff have access to a detailed Whistle Blowing policy which assists the service to uncover poor practices and further safeguard residents.

Young people benefit from the home's detailed complaints policies and procedures. These are well known to residents as the home's complaints procedures are discussed at residents' meetings and in individual key work sessions. The home has received one complaint since the last inspection. This was well documented, managed appropriately and in accordance with written procedures. Young people have access to information about making a complaint via the children's guide and information posted in the home's communal areas. Literature includes the contact details of local placing authorities, external advocacy groups and Ofsted. However, information to young people generally highlights procedures if complaints are made against the service and support staff; the information identifies the provider as responsible for the management of complaints. Written literature is not explicit in outlining procedures in the event of young people wanting to make a complaint against the provider.

Young people's information is kept confidential in the home. All written information is secure in the staff office and information held electronically is password protected. There are sound policies in place that address confidentiality and privacy issues including an Access to Files policy. The home has a 'quiet room' which young people use to hold private discussions and young people's information is shared with others on a 'needs to know' basis only. Young people feel that staff respect their privacy well and that relationships between residents and staff are based on trust. Staff do not have access to young people's bedrooms without their permission; exceptions to this are if staff feel risks are posed to young people's safety.

The home has sufficient toilet and washing facilities as there are en suite facilities in every bedroom and additional communal toilets on the ground floor.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The previous inspection highlighted the need for the home to evidence written care and placement plans for each young person in placement. File review of one young person currently resident at the home did not evidence care plans or placement plans by either the placing authority or staff of the home. Senior staff indicate that key documents, including the agreed care plan, have been requested by the placing authority, but are yet to be received. Staff indicate that the lack of care plans devised by staff of the home is an oversight. However, senior staff are able to verbalise the placement goals for the young person in question. Documented care plans are an important feature of young people's placements to ensure that all parties are working effectively to achieve placement objectives. This is a repeat requirement.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
2	ensure that there is an up to date placement plan for each young person accommodated at the home. (Regulation 12)	3 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- consider making explicit written procedures to address the management of complaints if made against the provider. (NMS 16)