

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sandra Jacobs-Walls
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Date of last inspection	18 May 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 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. At the time of the inspection, four young people were in placement at the home.

Summary

This inspection was a key inspection and its purpose was to assess the service against all key national minimum standards and gauge the home's success in addressing outstanding issues from the last inspection. The inspection examined all outcome areas.

The previous inspection highlighted weaknesses in documentation of placement plans and the home's complaints procedure. Both these issues have been satisfactorily resolved.

Staff provide young people in placement with good quality care. Staff pay good attention to young people's health care needs, support to keep young people safe and encourage their academic achievement. Young people have opportunities to pursue leisure activities and consultation with young people is effective. The home has good policies in place that support staff practices and file information is comprehensive. Relationships between staff and young people are good and the service is well run.

The inspection noted that the home's statement of purpose document does not accurately reflect the age range of young people admitted to the home and staff do not consistently record discussion of residents' meetings.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection resulted in one requirement and one recommendation. These issues were related to staff's documentation of placement plans and the revision of the home's complaints procedure. Both these issues have been satisfactorily resolved.

Managers of the home continue to monitor well the functioning of the service and are committed to making improvements. One such new development is the introduction of 'Me Time'. These are 1:1 meetings between young people and the provider, giving young people a formal opportunity to speak with the provider about service provision.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people live healthy lives while in placement at the home. Staff encourage young people to address all health care and medical issues promptly. Young people are registered with key

primary care services soon after placement start. Staff encourage young people to make and attend health care appointments and files evidence the outcome of any such appointment. Young people's individual case files have a designated section for health care matters and information here is comprehensive. The home has on display varied information that pertains to general and specialist health care services such, as sexual health and services for emotional and psychological support. Young people have access to a local authority nurse who visits the home on a monthly basis and is available as necessary. The home has in place good policies that address health care issues; these include a general health and development policy and alcohol and substance misuse policies. Individual key work sessions sensitively address young people's health care needs. Young people comment that staff pay good attention to their health care issues and they feel they lead healthy lifestyles.

The provision of meals in the home is good. Staff provide young people with nutritious, balanced meals that are varied. Young people indicate that the meals provided by the home are excellent. Staff encourage young people to make decisions about meal planning and to assist shop and prepare meals. Staff provide culturally appropriate meals as required, for example no pork is offered and Halal meat is provided for young people who are of the Muslim faith.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has confidentiality policies in place and these are well known to young people and staff. Young people comment that they feel staff respect them and their privacy and that information shared is kept confidential. Case files are stored in the staff office in a locked cabinet. All electronic information is password protected. Managers comment that staff are encouraged to adopt good practices that safeguard young people's information, for example young people are interviewed in private and information is shared with others on a need to know basis only.

The home has a comprehensive complaints procedure in place, which has been updated since the last inspection. No complaints have been made against the service in several months and young people indicate familiarity with the complaints procedure. The home has on display information relating to the complaints procedure and the contact details of independent child advocacy groups. Information about making complaints is also available in the children's guide.

The welfare of young people is promoted and they are protected from abuse and harm while in placement. The home has comprehensive child protection and safeguarding policies and these feature in the induction of new staff. More established staff and managers have access to a rolling programme of child protection training that is facilitated by the host local authority. Staff have access to written information to help support their practice. Safeguarding issues are also regularly discussed in staff meetings. Young people comment that they feel safe while living at the home and feel that staff are committed to promoting their safety. Managers comment, and files indicate that some young people are considered very vulnerable and there are good systems in place to address known risks.

The home has good anti-bullying policies in place and staff's 'zero tolerance' for instances of bullying is well known. The home's young people's guide includes information about bullying. Young people indicate that bullying does not occur in the home and are confident that should an incident occur, that staff would deal with it swiftly and appropriately. Similarly, there are policies in place to address young people who are absent from the home without permission.

Staff and young people are familiar with the home's missing person's protocols and where young people are deemed 'missing', staff maintain good records of action taken.

Staff and young people indicate that generally the behaviour of young people is positive. While there are clear behavioural management policies in place, staff prefer to discuss matters with young people as opposed to imposing sanctions when their behaviour is unacceptable. This appears to be a very effective approach. No sanctions have been imposed since the last inspection, some 6 months ago. The home's use of constant dialogue and a rewards system works well to encourage sustained acceptable behaviour amongst young people.

The home's premises provides physical safety and security. Staff conduct a health and safety audit each month and there are comprehensive health and safety policies in place. A fire authority inspection took place in April of this year; its findings are satisfactory. Staff take good fire precautionary measures, including regular fire drill and the weekly checking of points. The home employs an independent company to complete quarterly checks of extinguishers, water temperatures, emergency lighting and portable appliance testing. Young people indicate that they feel secure living in the home; an intruder alarm is in effect during the night and staff can view the front and side view of the building through use of CCTV.

With regards to staff vetting, the home has a recruitment and selection policy in place. Since the last inspection, the service has recruited one new member of staff. Review of the staff member's personnel file evidence that all information as specified in the regulations has been obtained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff demonstrate a very good understanding of the individual needs of young people resident at the home. The care planning process is 'tailor made' to meet individual needs and placement plans are explicit about how these needs are to be addressed. Key work sessions focus on the needs of individuals and address very specific issues, in particular, those of a child protection nature. Young people indicate that they feel their needs are well met by the service.

Education is a high priority of the home and there are policies in place that promote the achievements of young people in placement. Case files evidence good information about young people's educational progress. Key work sessions also routinely focus on educational issues. Staff of the home have an excellent working relationship with school personnel and keenly advocate on behalf of young people. Liaison and communication between staff, local educational resources and the placing authority are good. Where necessary, staff have negotiated for 1:1 educational tuition for young people who are not attending school. Young people indicate that staff are encouraging of their educational success and have been instrumental in supporting them meet their educational goals.

The home encourages young people to pursue recreational interests. There are opportunities for young people to participate in individual interests and hobbies and to also participate in arranged group activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensively. Files evidence written needs assessments and care plans completed by the local authority, while staff of the home complete placement plans. Plans devised by the home are in accordance with those of the placing authority. Placement plans are detailed and account for young people's the holistic needs and take into account any specialist need.

Young people's needs and general development are constantly under review while in placement and this is the primary objective of key work sessions. Staff of the home complete monthly and in some cases, fortnightly summary reports highlighting young people's progress and placement issues. Staff maintain young people's documented placement plans current to account for any new developments. These reports contribute to statutory Looked After Children's (LAC) reviews.

Staff encourage young people to maintain positive relationships with family members and friends. Young people are aware of the home's expectations with regard to visitation to the home. This information is contained in the service's children's guide. Where there are imposed restrictions on the contact between young people and others, this is explicitly documented on case files.

The home's planned admission of young people is well organised by the staff group. Staff encourage prospective residents to visit the home initially for introduction to staff and existing residents. Upon admission young people are provided with introduction and welcome packs. Staff conduct a tour of the home and its surrounding areas. Where placements are not planned staff make good efforts to ensure young people are aware of services provided. Staff support young people move on to alternative accommodation and ensure they are well prepared to live independently or return home.

Staff encourage young people to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. Key work sessions consistently explore placement issues and young people's progress. Young people are invited to share any views held with any member of staff at any time. Since the last inspection, the service has introduced a new forum 'Me Time'. This is a formal 1:1 session for young people to meet with the provider to specifically explore a range of issues, including service provision. Staff indicate that young people have ample opportunity to participate in the decision making process and do so even without being asked. The home also convenes residents meetings, which is another forum for young people to share their views and influence how the service is run. However, staff do not consistently record discussion and outcomes of these meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive care which helps to prepare them for adulthood. Staff of the home support older young people in placement to develop independent living skills. These include practical and emotional support to develop skills around budgeting, independent travel in the community, shopping and preparing meals and issues of personal safety. Staff offer support in accordance with local authority Pathway Plans and assist practically with young people's transition from being looked after to leaving care. Staff encourage former residents to stay in touch with staff if they so wish for continuing emotional support.

The home's premises is extremely well maintained, is well decorated and furnished. Young people indicate they are appreciative of the high standards staff maintain in the home's

environment. The home's building is very clean and hygienic. Young people enjoy a range of recreational and educational resources in the home including audio, television, DVD and reading materials. Young people comment that their bedrooms are equally well furnished and decorated and staff encourage them to personalise their own private space. Managers comment that new artwork and posters have very recently been purchased, these are due to be erected along with the forthcoming Christmas decorations.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's promotion of equality and diversity and its impact is good. Staff of the home are aware and address well the holistic needs of young people, taking into account their ethnic, cultural and religious needs. Placement plans are explicit about how individual needs are to be met by the service. Where particular issues are noted, for example supporting young people practice their chosen faith, providing culturally appropriate foods and addressing issues of sexuality, staff manage these issues effectively and sensitively. The home works within an anti-discriminatory framework, practice is guided by equal opportunities policies.

The home provides young people and other stakeholders with clear information about services offered. The home's statement of purpose is a comprehensive document that outlines the aims and objectives of the service and what is to be expected. The document however, does not accurately reflect the age range of young people admitted to the home in accordance with its condition of registration. Managers comment that this is an oversight. Young people confirm that they receive good information about services offered by the home. The children's guide is a creative, informative document, geared towards the use of young people considering placement at the home. The guide is written in age appropriate language with relevant graphics.

Young people share positive relationships with staff. The staff group is well established and is essentially a family business. Staff enjoy good training opportunities and are well qualified and experienced to conduct their duties. Staff receive good support from managers; formal and informal supervision is regular and staff appraisals are conducted annually.

The home's monitoring systems are effective; managers of the home regularly monitor the performance of staff and consult with young people about services provided. Managers of the home have a 'hands on' approach to management and are very accessible to young people and the staff group. The newly developed 'Me Time' provision is a good example of service monitoring. In addition, the home employs an independent person to conduct its monthly monitoring visits. These are consistently conducted and well reported upon. Report recommendations are swiftly addressed.

Staff maintain young people's case files privately and securely. Case files contain comprehensive information about young people and plans in place for them whilst in placement. File documentation is detailed and young people can access information through use of the home's access to files policy.

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
8	promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children by maintaining records of the home's residents' meetings (Regulation 11)	1 March 2010
1	ensure that the statement of purpose reflects accurately the age range of young people accommodated in the home. (Regulation 4)	1 March 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.