

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lucy Martin
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	24 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

A private company owns and operates this children's home. It is registered to accommodate three children of either sex from 10 years to under 18 years at any one time who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties.

The setting is a detached house. Located on the lower floor are two young people's bedrooms, bathroom, laundry room, the education room and two staff sleeping-in rooms. The upper floor consists of the staff office, a lounge, kitchen with dining area, toilet and a young person's bedroom. The garden is of a good size.

Summary

At this two day notice inspection, all key standards were inspected. An integrated inspection of the education and welfare took place at the same time. The inspection of the organisation's independent school which all the young people at the home attend, is reported on individually. The report is published separately on Ofsted's website. Three young people currently live in the home, and two were present and participated in the welfare element of the inspection.

This is a good service with some outstanding features. Outcomes for the individual young people are generally good and demonstrate individualised care and support that reflects the young person's needs exceptionally well. The health needs of the young people are very well met and all the working plans in the young people's files are comprehensive and are maintained to a high standard. There are excellent professional relationships between the staff and the young people and the young people are consulted regularly regarding the running of the home.

Three recommendations have been made regarding fire safety, reviewing the strategies in place to ensure prompt and regular attendance at school and to ensure that there is information provided to placing authorities and to the young people regarding the electronic surveillance systems in place.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health needs of the young people are clearly identified and are very well met. The health care plans written for each young person are comprehensive in detail and are updated on a monthly basis. Regular medical appointments with health care professionals take place and are well recorded and followed up. The young people also receive good levels of support regarding their mental and emotional health and issues around substance misuse.

Healthy lifestyles are promoted within the home. Healthy foods are provided and the young people are involved in physical activities with members of staff such as going to the gym and skateboarding. Issues around health are covered in school such as pregnancy and healthy eating.

All medication is securely stored in a locked cabinet in the office. Staff receive training in the safe administration of medication and all records are completed to a high standard. Low levels of medication are administered to the young people and regular stock controls of medicines take place. All staff have attended training in first aid and first aid boxes are provided within the home.

The young people are provided with a variety of healthy and home cooked meals. The food menus are discussed weekly and are tailored to the young people's likes and dislikes. Some of the young people are on independence programmes that involve planning, shopping and cooking their own food a few times a week. Mealtimes are sociable occasions with the staff and young people eating together and enjoying each other's company. Drinks and snacks such as fresh fruit are freely available. There is training provided for staff in food handling and hygiene.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are effective systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of the young people. The young people feel safe and know how to use the complaints procedure. Complaints are taken seriously and are fully addressed. The staff team receive training in the complaints procedure. Confidential information is securely stored in the office and the young people are not allowed to enter this room.

Any child protection incidents are well recorded, including the actions taken. Staff are aware of how to report incidents to the local authority and there are good and effective working arrangements in place. Policies regarding child protection are updated annually and a copy of the local authority procedures is kept in the home. All staff receive regular training in child protection, at least every two years, from management staff within the organisation. They oversee all child protection issues and have themselves received suitable training for this role.

There are occasions when the young people go missing from the home, sometimes for long periods. Policies are clear about the actions to be taken in the event of a young person going missing. Absences are monitored and issues discussed during key work sessions and as part of placement plans. When there is prolonged absence, appropriate meetings are held to discuss the actions to be taken and are fully recorded.

Staff respond positively to good behaviour and there is an incentive system in place whereby the young people can earn extra money if their behaviour is good. Reparation and restitution is encouraged in order to avoid the need for formal sanctions. Any sanctions imposed are recorded and are monitored on a regular basis. Physical restraints are rare at the home and only two such incidents have taken place since the last inspection. All staff receive training in behaviour management which includes the use of restraint. Appropriate records are maintained if such an incident takes place.

Health and safety matters are taken seriously at the home. Regular fire drills take place and there are routine servicing and checks of the equipment. There are two fire doors at the home leading to the kitchen and to the laundry room which are not kept shut and could compromise safety in the event of a fire. Gas and electrical safety checks are regularly carried out and there are risk assessments in place regarding the home.

There are robust procedures in place for the recruitment of new staff. All the required checks are routinely carried out and the files are maintained to a high standard. It is positive that the young people are informally involved in the recruitment process and that Criminal Record Bureau checks are renewed on an annual basis. All visitors are asked to sign the visitor's book and there are thorough checks completed for any staff provided through an agency.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are high levels of individual support provided to the young people. All have a key worker and regular meetings take place which are well recorded. The young people feel able to talk to members of the staff team about concerns or worries and staffing levels facilitate this. All the young people also have professional workers external to the home, from whom they can access additional support. These include staff from the children and adolescent mental health service, substance misuse workers and mentors.

The children's home is also registered as a school which all the young people attend. The staff team support some lessons by sitting in the classroom which is situated within the home and by attending a local college with the young person. The school is registered with the Department for Children, Schools and Families and has a designated teacher who is managed by a head teacher who oversees the education of all the young people placed in the organisation's homes. The teacher is part of the staff team and attends the monthly team meetings. Good levels of information regarding the education of individual young people are found in their files including Personal education plans and school reports.

There are low levels of attendance for the young people at school. There is evidence that this is discussed with the young people in keywork sessions and that the residential staff actively encourage the young people to attend. However, there are not clear strategies detailed on file regarding each young person and how to encourage attendance and the consequences for non attendance. For example, the young people are not allowed to go out on a paid activity in the evening if they have not attended school, but they are still allowed to have a television in their bedroom which they can watch as late as they like. Clearer consistent strategies would ensure that the residential staff are supporting attendance at school as much as possible.

The young people take part in a wide range of activities, both within the home and in the local community. Sporting activities such as jogging and skateboarding are currently popular as well as trips to the cinema and to a local lake. The home has two vehicles to transport the young people and regular maintenance checks are undertaken. Risk assessments are written for activities and are regularly updated.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The young people have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensively. The young people's files contain detailed information of high quality which include placement plans, strategy documents, a 24 hour management plan, short term care plans and independent plans. All these documents are reviewed on a monthly basis which ensures that they remain relevant and up to date. Weekly reports are written by keyworkers which are shared with the young

people's social workers. The young people are encouraged to participate in their statutory reviews and a report on progress is written by the home.

The young people are provided with support to maintain constructive contact with their families. Staff transport to visits and supervise if required. All contact arrangements, including any restrictions in place, are clearly detailed in the young people's files. There are procedures for moving in and leaving the home and this is undertaken in a sensitive manner, taking into account the needs of the young person concerned and the existing group.

There are plenty of opportunities for the young people to be involved in discussions about the running of the home and regular formal meetings take place. The young people are encouraged to air their views and they are listened to. There are excellent professional relationships in place between the staff and the young people. They enjoy each other's company and the staff provide a supportive environment at all times.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The young people receive good levels of support which prepares them for adulthood. There are detailed plans for independence written which identify the areas of support needed. The staff team have experience of preparing young people for independent living and support the young people with areas such as shopping and cooking.

The house is detached with good sized rooms and a garden. There are homely touches such as photographs of the young people and artwork on the walls done by them. All areas are furnished and decorated to a good standard and the young people have been involved in choosing the colour schemes. Bedrooms are well personalised and the young people are given their own keys to their rooms. One young person has a window box outside the bedroom and has chosen and planted the flowers. Since the last inspection, the office has been moved upstairs to a more central location which is working well.

The home has a sophisticated security system in place which includes an alarm that sounds when the young people enter or leave their bedroom. This is operational 24 hours a day. While the young people are aware of this, there are no details regarding its use in either the Statement of Purpose or the young people's guide. This would ensure that all are aware of its purpose and operation.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a Statement of Purpose and a young person's guide which are comprehensive and up to date. Both provide a clear description of what services they can expect from the home.

The home is currently without a registered manager. A new manager started in April but has since left. The assistant service manager is currently overseeing the home while a new manager is being recruited. This interim arrangement is working effectively and ensures that the staff team have guidance and support from a senior person within the organisation. Monitoring of

the home and its practice is of a high standard. The monthly monitoring reports are comprehensive and contain recommendations for improvement.

There is a consistent staff team and the home will be fully staffed, apart from the manager, from July onwards. New staff have been appointed and there is a good mix of experience and gender within the staff team. There has been regular use of agency staff over the last few months but the home tries to ensure that shortfalls are covered by known agency staff as well as staff from the other organisation's home or by bank staff. Staffing levels are high, with a minimum of two staff on duty and frequently three. Staff are provided with a good variety of training which ensures that they are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of the young people and the purpose of the home. A number of staff have completed or are part way through National Vocational Qualification at Level 3.

Staff feel well supported by management and regular supervision sessions take place which are recorded. Staff meetings are held monthly and are well attended.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The young people are well known to the staff team and any individual support needs are well met. There is an acceptance and basic tolerance of the young people towards each other and other people.

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 that fire safety is not compromised by fire doors being held open (NMS 26)
- review the strategies in place to ensure prompt and regular attendance at school (NMS 14)
- ensure that there is information regarding the electronic surveillance of the young people in the young people's guide and the Statement of Purpose (NMS 23).