

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	26 January 2010
Inspector	Gaynor Moorey
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	21 April 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 is a children's home is registered to provide residential care for up to six young women. The home is a large, detached house. The children's home is part of a private company which has an independent fostering agency, a total of three residential homes and an independent school.

Summary

This unannounced random inspection took place on a week day. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key National Minimum Standards.

The standard of care at the home has fallen and the general feeling at the home is that systems are unorganised. The home is maintained by guidance, policies and procedures but has failed to maintain its systems to show clear and transparent practices when safeguarding the young people. The home provides the young people with an satisfactory level of emotional support and encourages them with their education and interests. The home ensures that information is in place to enable statutory reviews to take place. Young people enjoy contact with family and friends and are given some opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The home is well maintained and provides a satisfactory homely environment for the young people to experience life. The organisation has systems in place that include supervision and training, however, the overall monitoring of the home has currently failed to pick up on issues that may place the young people at risk.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the home received four recommendations to that; the child protection log book is organised and kept in order of date; the home is kept safe at all times; that carpets and flooring are clean and in good repair and that regular training happens for all staff. The home has worked hard on meeting some of the recommendations. The house has been renovated to a good standard and the front door is shut and locked. The organisation have put a good training programme in place for the staff and there is evidence that staff had received updates to previous training courses. The home has addressed the recommendation about the child protection log and this is kept in date order.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

There are clear menus in place that offer the young people a healthy eating plan and contain various food from different cultures. However, young people seem unaware that the menu was in place as they had not seen it being used and there was not one displayed in the dinning room. Young people said they do contribute to making decision about what they eat and choices are generally made on a daily basis. Young people identified that the staff do try to encourage healthy eating. Staff are given training to run a safe and clean kitchen in order to produce meals for the young people. The young people identified that they are not undertaking independence training at the moment.

Staff generally manage young people health needs, including medication. All staff are trained in first aid. All medication is kept securely and records are accurate with a stock taking system. Documentation around the use of medication, such as the risk assessment for medication, is out of date. Clear medication systems are in place for the use of homely medication. Medical consents are in place for the young people, however, one consent form was only half complete and permission for homely remedies had not been signed. There are clear records to show that homely remedies had been given without this consent. There are systems in place to safeguard the administration of medicines, however, some of this system can be seen to be failing, which could impact on young people's safety.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Staff ensure that young people's confidentiality and privacy is respected and safeguarded, by knocking on bedroom doors and making and receiving telephones calls in private. Confidential information relating to each young person is kept in an appropriate locked facility. All information is contained in the office. Staff receive guidance on the confidentiality of information.

Policies and procedures are in place to safeguard and promote the children's welfare. Due to effective communication, attentive staff, and close supervision, complaints were seen to be dealt with effectively and appropriately. Staff enable young people to make a complaints. By the use of one-to-one sessions and resident's meetings, staff are pro-active in seeking out the views and concerns of young people. Young people said they felt that staff did listen to them when they are worried about something.

Staff receive child protection training within their induction programme and subsequent refresher courses during their employment in order to have clear insight into dealing with such issues. The home has a clear policy when dealing with child protection which includes up to date safeguarding guidance. Since the last inspection a number of incidents has occurred which have been written into the home's child protection log. None of the incidents were reported to Ofsted. Two incidents had not had their outcomes recorded.

The home operates a policy of zero tolerance toward bullying and the children are made aware of the guidance on admission. If bullying does occur, staff at the home deal with issues in an appropriate manner. The young people have behaviour management plans which look at any potential issues related to bullying behaviour. The home has in place forums for young people talk, on a one to one basis or as a group, to look at any issues there may be in the group.

There is a policy and procedure for reporting young people who are missing without permission. Records of young people going missing showed no increase in the number of incidents since the last inspection. However, evidence found within young people's individual files indicates some events that have happened have not been recorded in the dedicated log. Staff are provided with clear guidance to address such situations.

Records examined indicate that not all serious incidents are reported as required by regulation. The acting manager confirmed that serious incidents are investigated and they also involve other agencies.

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour. All sanctions are recorded in a dedicated book, however, some of entries are in the wrong date sequence. Since the last inspection there has been an increase in the use of sanctions. In general sanctions given are permissible and mainly relate to a loss of some pocket money. However, one entry in the log book was inappropriate and was a major incident, which was illegal in context. This should have led to a serious notification with professional involvement, including the police.

All staff receive training in the use of physical restraint. The home has a policy which offers guidance to staff in regard to behaviour management and restraint. The young people have risk assessments in place to look at any risky behaviour, these are contained within their behaviour management plans. However, some of these assessments are overdue for review. Staff encourage acceptable behaviour and restraint records show that no incidents have happened for two years.

The home has documentation related to risk assessment. Some have not been updated to take into account current risks posed by some young people. In addition, the home's fire risk assessment was found to over due for review, while evacuation procedures have not been adhered to by young people themselves. Clear systems are in place and checks could be seen from outside agencies.

Staff records seen at the home for new staff employed since the last inspection indicate that staff are subject to a comprehensive recruitment process. Agency staff are vetted by their agency and details forwarded to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive individual support, guidance and care. Young people are supported in accessing specialist services such as therapy. However, there is evidence of specific appointments not being arranged as quickly as needed or wanted by the young people. Placement and care plans are in place, listing the needs of each young person. The young people observed appeared to be at ease in the company of all the staff on duty, and social interaction was both spontaneous and warm.

Staff actively support young people in their education. Young people are provided educational placements through the organisation's school. The young people's files contain personal education plans. Each young person has clear records on file of their progress at school. The home do provide facilities to support the educational progress. However, on the day of the inspection the group computer was broken and there seem to be an issue of communication as to when the computer would be mended.

Staff facilitate access to activities. The young people identified that activities are arranged on a daily basis which includes the weekend and this can vary as to which staff are on duty. The young people also feel that the home is unorganised so everything is left to the last moment. Care plans do identify activities requested by the young people but these do not happen on a regular basis. This can be due to young people changing their minds. Activities are risk assessed to minimise the risk factor for each young person. The home has its own transport that is used to support social and recreational activities. Safety checks are undertaken but the last one was cancelled and not re-booked.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people's needs are assessed prior to placement. Documentation is kept on file to offer historical information on each young person. The young people have placement and care plans that identify their health, physical, social, educational cultural and leisure needs. Alongside this, each young person has a behaviour management plan which contain risk assessments around young people endangering themselves. Some of the risk assessments for the young people are out of date. Documentation shows placing authorities operate a reviewing process to chart the progress of the young people.

Staff continue to encourage and facilitate young people to have appropriate contact with family and friends, to retain ties with family and their local community.

Staff consult young people on a daily basis and aid them, as far as it is possible, to consider their circumstances, behaviours, relationships and interactions. The young people were having meetings on a monthly basis but young people identified that this has not happen recently. The young people did identify that they have felt that home has been disorganised and they feel that things happened on a daily basis rather than having any planning, such as the food and activities. Consultation does happened at the home but on an informal basis rather than clear planned structures for meetings to happened.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Pathway planning for most young people starts at 14. The home has not been working with the young people to undertake independence training. The young people said that the staff over the last four months have not been engaging them in budgeting, or the cooking of their own meals. The acting manager and the young people identified that plans are now in place for this to begin. The staff hold a strong ethic of remaining in touch with the young people once they have left in order to support them in their new lives.

The accommodation is clean and tidy and provides each young person with both communal areas for group living and individualised private areas, such as their bedrooms, where they can spend time alone. The house has recently been renovated, which includes most areas in the house. Bedrooms are decorated to the young person's choice of colour, furniture and accessories. The home had just admitted a new young person who showed the inspector their room which was lovely with furniture, bedding and decoration having been chosen by the young person before they started their placement. There are adequate bathroom and toilets facilities, some of the bedrooms are en-suite. Sleeping-in staff have their own dedicated accommodation.

The home is tastefully decorated in an appropriate manner and includes a lounge, dinning room, and computer area. There is a large garden for the young people to spend time in. The home offers the young people a positive environment to live in, which is both comfortable and homely.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The home has an acting manager in place who started in December 2009. The long term manager left in October 2009 and during the period before the new acting manager started two senior people in the organisation over saw the running of the home. Young people benefit from having a core team which has remained stable. The new Statement of Purpose provides adequate information about the home's services. The children's guide is in an appropriate format and the young people are provided with a copy of the guide when they arrive at the home.

The young people benefit from a staff team that is of mixed gender and cultural mix together with a balance of youth and maturity. The staff are provided with a good range of training, including child protection, team teach, health and safety, fire safety, as well as qualifications and training specifically geared towards those young people placed at the home. Over half of the staff the have completed the National Vocational Qualification. However, staff moral seemed quite low with the staff feeling confused about changing systems and felt that the last few months had been a difficult period in the home's history. Supervision records are in place and indicate that staff are receiving regular supervision.

External monitoring of the home's systems and practices occurs on a monthly basis with reports being kept in hard copy and sent into Ofsted. The reports show a clear system of monitoring which looks and covers all areas in the home. The report has highlighted areas which needed some attention which were inclusive of records related to 'Staying Safe' such as sanctions. The observations had clearly not been addressed by the home. It is clear that the management and the monitoring of the home has failed in some respects, possibly placing the young people at risk.

Systems are in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people living in the home. However, these could be seen to fail at times with observations from reports not being followed. Young people's files are maintained and organised and kept securely in the staff office.

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
26	ensure that all parts of the home to which children have access are, so far as reasonably practicable, free from hazards to their safety; unnecessary risks to the health and safety of children accomodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23(a)(c))	9 February 2010
20	notify without delay the relevant persons or agencies of the matters set out in Schedule 5, in particular serious illness or serious accident sustained by a child accomodated in the home and instigation and outcome of any child protection enquiry involving a child accommodated at the home (Regulation 30)	9 February 2010

33	ensure that clear systems are in place to monitor records in relation to the children's safety and well being. (Regulation 34(1))	9 February 2010
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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 the record of menus (as served) demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet (NMS10.4)
- ensure written permission from a person with parental responsibility for each child, for administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication (NMS13.4)
- ensure that the child protection log book is organised and outcomes of investigations are written up (NMS17)
- ensure records of children going missing from the home without permission are up to date (NMS19.6)
- ensure young people take part in fire evacuations (NMS26.8)
- ensure appointments are booked with specialist services on the request of the young people where appropriate (NMS7.10)
- ensure behaviour management plans and risk assessments are reviewed and updated (NMS2)
- ensure that each young person has a clear independence learning skills plan in place which is used in practice (NMS6.6)
- ensure risk assessments are up dated to reflect the young people's behaviour. (NMS26.6)