

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC014848
Inspection date	29 June 2010
Inspector	Gaynor Moorey / Liz Driver
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	26 January 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

This 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 key inspection took place on a weekday. The purpose of the inspection was to undertake a full review encompassing all the key national minimum standards.

The manager and the experienced staff team provide a satisfactory standard of care. The home tries to ensure the safety of the young people through comprehensive and clear guidance, policies and procedures. The home provides the young people with emotional support and tries to encourage them with their education and interests. The home ensures that specific and accurate information is in place to enable statutory reviews to take place. Young people enjoy contact with family and friends and are given opportunities to express their opinions and make choices about their lives. The home is maintained to a good level, providing a homely environment for the young people to live in. The staff are generally supported by an experienced manager and comprehensive systems that includes supervision and training.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the setting was given three actions and eight recommendations to address. Overall, the setting has worked hard to address them resulting in a change from the previous overall judgement of inadequate to satisfactory.

All parts of the setting were seen to be free from hazards and strategies are in place to lessen the risk of health and safety issues for young people. All matters set out in schedule 5 of the children's homes regulations are now forwarded to Ofsted by means of a notification. Improved record keeping allows the manager to monitor incidents and the young people's safety and well-being.

Menus are available and give a clear record of the meals eaten at the home. All written consents for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescribed medications have been gained from the person with parental responsibility. The home has put into place some independence training but the young people do not make best use of this. Improvements to the child protection log and young people missing without permission log have taken place which has resulted in better organised and maintained records. Fire drills and evacuations have taken place although the young people continue to refuse to engage in them. The manager has asked that a representative from the local fire service visit to discuss this with the young people. Any appointments requested or identified are booked and recorded, however, they were seen to not always be accepted and used by the young people. Behaviour management plans and risk assessments have been updated and are a true reflection of young people's needs and difficulties.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Clear menus are now in place with food chosen by the young people. These were seen to contain healthy eating options and various dishes from different cultures. The young people's individual and dietary needs are highlighted in care plans and are being catered for. Young people make choices about the food they eat including their snacks. Young people are encouraged to undertake life skills which include budgeting, and cooking for themselves and others. Staff are given training to run a safe and clean kitchen in order to produce meals for the young people. Young people are encouraged to think about issues around healthy eating but said that staff had been negative about weight issues so they are now unwilling to engage in this.

The health and welfare of young people are carefully considered and actively promoted. The home has put into place health plans which contain comprehensive and detailed information pertaining to the health needs of the young people. It was noted that appointments could be seen to have been made for young people at the dentist and opticians but these had been refused. Sexual health and information relating to social and welfare issues are taught in school and age-appropriate information is readily available in the home. This has helped the young people to make informed decisions such as visiting the sexual health clinic. The young people's mental and emotional health is seen as important and specialist help is available when needed. Young people are negative about how staff look after them. Young people are receiving support and annual medicals from the looked after children's nurse. The home tries to meet the health care needs of the young people but struggle to fulfil this when appointments are refused.

Staff manage the young people's health needs in a comprehensive manner with systems in place to safeguard their needs. All staff are trained in first aid. Records for medication are kept in a separate file, and both prescribed and non-prescribed medication is up to date and correctly recorded. There is appropriate storage for all controlled medication. The home has a stocktaking system in place. Medical consents for all young people are available for emergency treatment, first aid and the administration of medication. The home ensures young people's health needs are met during treatment or when treatment is required.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected with staff knocking on doors and young people being able to make and receive telephone calls in private. Young people also have keys to their individual bedrooms. All confidential information relating to young people is stored safely and securely and handled appropriately. There is written guidance for staff around the handling of confidential information. The home has guidance in place for the use of room searches.

Young people, staff and others are able to make a complaint via the settings complaint procedure. Young people are confident in raising issues that concern them. Complaints are dealt with effectively and appropriately with satisfactory records being kept.

Young people live in a setting where policies and procedures are in place to protect them. Current young people exhibit risky and challenging behaviour which is difficult for staff to manage and to ensure they stay safe at all times. The staff team receive child protection and safeguarding training with refresher courses also on offer. All child protection incidents are forwarded onto the appropriate agency, including notifying Ofsted. Record keeping has

improved since the last inspection with organised records now in place and outcomes of referrals also documented.

It is made clear to the young people on admission that the home has a policy of zero tolerance towards bullying. Young people's behaviour is identified and risk assessed within their behaviour management plans. The staff are aware of triggers and work hard to de-escalate potential bullying situations.

There is a policy and procedure for reporting young people who are missing without permission. Records show staff work with other agencies to lessen the individual risk young people may pose to themselves and others. The setting has made clear improvements in the recording of these events with evidence of the manager monitoring the records.

The setting reports any significant incidents to the appropriate agencies with a new and organised system in place for recording purposes. Serious incidents are appropriately investigated and can also involve other agencies.

It is made clear to the young people what is expected of them in relation to acceptable behaviour. The staff team respond positively to acceptable behaviour and work hard on promoting positive behaviour rather than negative behaviour. Sanctions are given for poor behaviour and records show this to be, in the main, for rudeness and abuse of food. Sanctions given are usually loss of internet use or a small financial fine. The manager monitors the sanctions given to ensure consistency and fairness.

The staff receive training in the use of physical interventions with records showing one to have taken place since the last inspection. The home has a clear policy which offers staff guidance in relation to behaviour management and interventions. The young people have risk assessments in place that addressed their behaviour which at times can be very risky. These have been reviewed and are up to date.

Improvements to the recording systems, for example incident forms, have been put in place since the last inspection; however, not all logs were seen to have been signed by the person completing them. Some individual forms showed two or three different handwriting styles with no signatures to identify which members of staff completed and added to the forms.

The home has clear procedures in place to ensure the safety of the environment. Regular checks on gas, electricity and fire systems are undertaken internally and by external contractors. Good records are kept. The young people remain very reluctant to participate in fire drills. The manager has arranged for a representative from the local fire service to visit the home in the near future to discuss this with the young people.

Although no new staff have commenced at the setting since the last inspection a sample of individual files viewed showed there to be a robust recruitment procedure in place. All visitors are vetted and agency staff details are forwarded onto the setting.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive individual support, guidance and care. Very clear placement plans are in place, listing comprehensively the needs of the young people. Placement plans indicate that

specialised assistance from a range of professionals, such as therapists and counsellors is sought to help address the needs of individual young people. While each young person is observed to be treated as an individual, there is clearly an emphasis on each young person assuming their share of the responsibilities associated with communal living such as clearing up after meals. The young people were observed to be angry towards the staff on the day of the inspection and were negative when talking about the care they received at the home. Staff try to be supportive and sensitive to any needs or situations the young people experience.

Staff actively try to support young people in their education and encourage regular attendance. The young people have educational placements at the organisation's school. The young people's files contain personal education plans where appropriate. The home provides the young people with various facilities for homework such as the use of a computer and facilities for the educational task. Each young person has clear records on file of their progress at school and the home's contact and involvement with the young people's educational placements.

Young people are offered sporting and recreational activities and evidence can be seen of this within the care plans. Independence is encouraged within the home where appropriate and young people can have independent time away from the home. Staff facilitate access to activities and clubs within the community although, currently, the young people are finding it difficult to participate in such situations. Each activity is risk assessed to minimise the risk factor for each young person. The home has its own transport to support social and recreational activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's needs are satisfactorily assessed prior to placement. Comprehensive documentation is kept on file to offer historical information on each young person. Young people have good placement plans that identify their health, physical, social, educational, cultural and leisure needs. Key workers review the progress of each young person and identify changes to meet individual needs. Key working staff, together with the manager, produce thorough reports for each review. Evidence was seen of the young people attending their statutory reviews and completing feedback forms. Although the young people spoken to felt they were uncertain of what was going to happen to them. Placing authorities operate a reviewing process to chart the progress of the young people and future plans for them could be seen on file.

A written admission procedure aims to help young people settle in. The young people are provided with a comprehensive guide on admission. Every effort is made by staff to ensure that arrivals and departures are planned. The staff at the home are supportive of the young people and look to pursue social workers and local authorities for the correct information and future planning information for each individual person's needs. Staff confirm that preparation for leaving when possible starts well in advance of an agreed date. Staff try to avoid emergency placements and every effort is made to minimise their impact when they do arise.

Staff encourage young people to have appropriate contact with family and friends and to retain ties in their local community. Clear records are kept of each contact visit and telephone call. Staff confirmed that any restrictions or choices made by the young people regarding contact were, when appropriate, made clear to all parties. Any restrictions are clearly written into placement plans.

Staff consult young people on a daily basis and empower them, as far as it is possible, to consider their circumstances, behaviours, relationships and interactions. The young people are provided with forums both formally and informally to discuss any choices and views they may have. This can be with their key workers or with any staff member. Staff strive to create an inclusive, reflective and participatory environment that encourages consultation and discussion. This appears to be effectively balanced by realistic boundaries. The young people do have avenues to voice their own opinions but said they did not feel listened to at times.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home has a policy to assist young people to make the transition into adulthood, which includes social and life skills training. The home has input into preparing young people for leaving the service. The young people spoke about not being involved in independent skills currently, however, it could be seen that they were cooking their own tea and said they were responsible for their own washing. 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 home does work with the young people's local authorities and social workers to look at planning each young person's future.

A tour of the building indicates that the home's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose. The home is based in an area that can offer the young people lots of activities and facilities. Records demonstrate that the home is subject to regular health and safety risk assessments and has certification relating to gas, electrical and fire equipment.

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. Bedrooms are decorated to the young people's choice of colour, furniture and accessories. There are adequate bathroom and toilet facilities. Sleeping-in staff have their own dedicated accommodation.

The home is maintained to a good standard and includes one lounge, a large dining room. The home continues to have a rolling programme of renovation. There is a well kept garden for the young people to spend time in.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people do not face any discrimination or racism and staff have access to guidance and support to ensure they respect individual needs be they related to, race, gender, sexuality, religious or cultural. Individual care plans and the review process highlight and guide staff to be able to meet the individual wishes of the young people.

The setting has an up to date Statement of Purpose that meets the recommendations of the national minimum standards. Young people are given a copy of the setting's children's guide on admission which gives them information about what they can expect at the setting.

The setting has a manager who is currently completing his application to register with Ofsted. Young people benefit from a staff team that is of mixed gender and age. The staff are

experienced and over half have completed national vocational qualifications. In house training is appropriate to the needs of the young people and staff. There have been changes to the staff working shifts since the last inspection. On the day of inspection, the staff members working were tired having been up until 3.00am the previous night due to challenging behaviour of the young people, plus one young person was leaving on the day of inspection. The staff are supported but have not been receiving supervision as often as recommended in the national minimum standards. Staff meetings do occur but again not as often as recommended. The staffing numbers are satisfactory with a recruitment drive having been recently undertaken. Young people are fully aware of which staff are on shift and who they can access.

Young people live in a home that is subject to internal and external monitoring. Monthly unannounced visits are carried out by the regulation 33 visitor who provides a report that is given to the manager and submitted to Ofsted. The reports show a clear system of monitoring which looks at all areas of the home. The manager also carries out a monthly check in accordance with regulation 34. These systems have improved since the last inspection. Systems are in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people. Their needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. Individual files are maintained and organised and kept safely and securely.

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
28	ensure staff supervision is provided to all staff as outlined in national minimum standard 28.2. (Regulation 27(4))	30 July 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure all records contain the signature of a person authorised by the registered person to make the record (NMS 22.9)
- ensure staff meetings occur at least monthly. (NMS 28.10)