

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Diana Waters
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Date of last inspection	12 July 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

The children's home is a semi-detached Victorian house, situated close to the centre of a small town. The home is registered for five young people and currently accommodates four teenage girls. The home provides individual support and preparation for independent living and offers an outreach service to support young people who have moved locally. The home offers a range of educational provision which includes individual tuition. The home aims to provide a range of emotional and behavioural support to vulnerable young people to prepare them for independent living.

Summary

This report follows a key unannounced inspection to the home. Since the last inspection three young people have moved out and four girls have been admitted. One member of staff has been re-employed. The home continues to provide a good and in one area outstanding service to the young people. Young people usually thrive at this home, they relate well to the staff group, they are encouraged to attend education, develop interests, maintain contact with friends and family and begin to take responsibility. Previous residents report excellent ongoing support when leaving the home to live locally.

Three recommendations are made at this inspection: continue the programme to upgrade the home, including the replacement of the boiler; reinstate a suitable staff sleeping in room; resolve the provision of first and second floor window restrictors.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous unannounced interim inspection in July 2009 there was two requirements. Placement plans are now in place and verification of the reason employment ended, when staff have previously been employed working with children or vulnerable adults, has been requested. The recommendation to review of restrictors for first and second floor windows has been completed and these rooms are risk assessed, however, sourcing suitable restrictors is ongoing.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people confirm they are encouraged to plan, buy and prepare meals. Meals are occasionally communally prepared and consumed. Most frequently young people are assisted in choosing and preparing individual meals and are encouraged to acquire skills for independent living.

Young people are encouraged to take an active interest in looking after their health. They receive good support to access advice, information and treatment from health professionals.

Young people's health needs are met and protected by policies and practice. Medication records are up to date.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Case files are securely stored. Young people's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled.

Young people confirm they know how to raise concerns both internally and externally. One external complaint has been satisfactorily addressed.

Child protection training is provided at induction and the staff are well informed and take appropriate action to safeguard the welfare of young people. The home has a positive relationship with the local police.

Bullying is not reported to be a serious problem. Staff are aware of the changeable group dynamics and appropriately address concerns.

Absconding has risen since the last inspection, predominantly this involved one young person who has moved on. Current absconding rates are low. Staff communicate well with other agencies and provide a consistently supportive response to young people.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially acceptable way and are encouraged to discuss and negotiate solutions. Sanctions are recorded. No restraints have been used in the home.

Several young people previously resident at the home have been successfully supported into independence. Their occasional visits provide incentives for the current young people to have hopes for their own future. A social worker of a previous resident said 'I have never seen such a turn around' and a family member commented 'the staff at bridge house are excellent, I have no queries at all'.

The home provides a comfortable domestic style environment. Safety systems are tested regularly, risk assessments are undertaken and monitored.

One member of staff has been recruited since the last inspection. Recruitment checks ensure young people are protected.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The support offered to young people in the home is exceptional. Young people confirm there are many opportunities to talk to staff and their individual need for support is met in a variety of ways. Placement plans and risk assessments are on file. Several young people previously resident at the home have been successfully supported into independence. Comments received clearly demonstrates the commitment of the home to support young people after leaving their care. One previous resident wrote 'thank you for everything you did for me. Everything I am is because of the love and support you gave me and still continue to give me'.

Young people attend school, college or tuition. Regular attendance is supported and rewarded. Young people are encouraged to work to their strengths but also try new experiences. Positive

relationships and good liaison exists with the local provision. Unannounced visits to tutors home are undertaken regularly. Tutors are registered with county's 'Otherwise Educated Team'

Young people are encouraged and facilitated to develop hobbies and leisure interests. Staff accompany, participate and transport young people to a variety of interests, friendships are encouraged and reciprocal arrangements are strongly supported.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are appropriately placed at the home and have their needs assessed effectively. Written placement plans outline how their needs will be met. There is regular communication with placing social workers and young people's families. Young people are encouraged to discuss, understand and contribute their views, they are supported and empowered to make decisions and accept responsibility for their actions.

Young people are admitted and leave the home in a planned manner, as far as possible. Young people are invited to visit the home prior to admission and are well supported when departures are planned. Each bedroom is decorated to reflect young people's individual choice, they are encouraged to choose and develop their own unique style.

Young people confirm they are consulted about decisions that affect their lives and are individually happy to speak up for themselves. Formal house meetings have been recently reintroduced. Questionnaires returned indicate young people cannot think of anything the home could do better and one commented 'It's the first time I have been happy in ages'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are taught life skills and routinely choose and shop for their own clothes and personal items. Budgeting skills and independent living are offered when appropriate. Young people receive exceptional care in preparing and supporting them when they remain in the locality. One previous resident spoke warmly of the support given during her stay in the home and the current support offered both emotionally and practically.

The home provides a comfortable domestic style home with redecoration and refurbishment of rooms and furniture on an ongoing programme. The service have reviewed the provision of window catches on the upper floors, without a satisfactory resolution. The boiler is scheduled for imminent replacement. One staff sleeping-in room was not operational for this purpose.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose describes what the home sets out to do for young people. The current Statement of Purpose was reviewed in 2009 and minor alterations are needed. Young people confirm they receive the young people's guide on or prior to admission.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The service have policies and procedures in place that promote understanding and tolerance. Young people are encouraged to express their individuality and to accept differences in each other and others.

Young people receive the care they need from competent staff. The majority of staff are qualified, participating or awaiting the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 Award in caring for children and young people. Staff receive induction training. Staff meetings are held monthly and minutes are brief. Staff appraisals are held annually. Supervision is held regularly and is recorded.

Young people continue to benefit from care provided by a group of regular staff. The staff group include both genders, varied age and ethnic groups.

The home continues to monitor the care provided. The registered provider is regularly in the home and is easily accessible to the staff and young people.

Records on young people are held securely. Young people access their records regularly. Young people's needs, development and progress are recorded on their individual case files and monthly reports are sent to placing social workers.

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
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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):

- reinstate a suitable room for staff sleeping in (NMS 24)
- continue the refurbishment of the home, specifically the bedroom furniture and replacement boiler (NMS 24)
- continue to review and resource suitable restrictors for first and second floor windows. (NMS 24)