

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	23 September 2009
Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Date of last inspection	9 June 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 registration is for a small children's home providing accommodation for three young people aged 10 up to the age of 18. There is a separate single bedded satellite home close by, both homes share a manager and draw from the same pool of staff.

The main home is inconspicuously located, some three miles south of a large market town, the satellite home is on the outer edge of the same town. The accommodation in both settings is domestic in scale. The main house is a compact but comfortable detached family house with a sizeable rear garden. The satellite home is a small two bedded semi-detached property with a small rear garden. Both homes afford individual bedrooms and have communal spaces downstairs. Each home has their own Statement of Purpose, but operate all of the policies and procedures of the main house. Both houses draw staff from an extended staff group based at the main house.

Summary

This was an unannounced random inspection that concentrated on checking all key National Minimum Standards (NMS), under the 'Every Child Matters' area of staying safe, it also followed up on the actions and recommendations raised on the home's previous key inspection which was conducted on the 9 June 2009. Four young people are currently living in the home and its' attached satellite unit.

The inspection found that the home has made significant improvements since it was last inspected. Considerable health and safety concerns were high-lighted at the homes key inspection in June 2009, mainly due to the home's inability to effectively assess risk, to maintain a safe living environment and to effectively monitor the care being provided. The home on this inspection was able to demonstrate that all health and safety issues have been appropriately dealt with and that the home has effective systems in place to ensure the provision of a safe care environment. The assessment of risk has improved and a satisfactory standard of care and support that helps young people in their education, personal, social and emotional development is now being provided. The home's manager has re-established strong and effective leadership and staff relationships with young people are both caring and supportive. There remains a need to improve the general level of staff qualifications in caring for Children and Young People.

This apart, the home is generally well managed and because of this young people benefit from living in an environment that is now centred on meeting their individual needs. Young people living here receive good individual support and their education and health is encouraged and appropriately promoted. The home is assessed on this inspection to be satisfactory.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection additional staff guidance has been issued to assist staff to produce a menu plan that is nutritionally balanced, whilst retaining a high degree of young person choice. The recording of each young person's individual food intake has improved, with greater detail.

Each young person now has a clear health plan that includes all of the details included within NMS 12.2, these health plans are dated and are regularly updated to reflect changes to young people's circumstances.

The recording of incidents, sanctions and restraints have all improved. Recording formats are now routinely completed in full, they are dated and signed both by staff and where appropriate young people. Any refusal to sign is also recorded. The home's manager has re-established a regular regime for monitoring these records and regularly indicates in the records any comments or observations she has about the effectiveness or otherwise of interventions.

The assessing of risk, both in terms of young people's behaviour and those concerned with practical safety have all improved. Risk Assessments are less generic in nature, are up to date and monitored frequently. The home's fire testing regime has returned to the frequencies indicated in the home's policies and procedures and Statement of Purpose.

All of the identified health and safety issues catalogued in the home's last inspection report have been satisfactorily addressed. All dangerous substances have been removed from the site, all necessary repairs have been completed and much re-decoration and refurbishment has been undertaken. Shortcomings in the home's maintenance provision appear to have been resolved and the home is able to demonstrate an appropriate ability to prioritise essential maintenance work. This ensures that young people are not exposed to unacceptable risk.

The internal monitoring of the service against its Statement of Purpose is now maintained with the frequency indicated in the homes' policies and procedures and the registered provider is ensuring that the home's performance is monitored in accordance with the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Staff are now receiving supervision in line with the frequencies and for the durations required by the NMS.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people at this home receive a good service that is clearly focused on their emotional wellbeing and health needs. Staff are actively involved in engaging with young people about a range of health related issues which result in consistent improvements to health and fitness. Young people's good health and wellbeing is being successfully promoted because staff are knowledgeable and aware of each individual young person's needs. Plans are agreed and designed to encourage healthy habits and to improve young people's self-image.

Since the home's last inspection additional staff guidance has been issued about healthy diet planning. Staff provide healthy, nutritious meals that meet young people's daily dietary needs, fruit is always available and they are, within reason, able to make themselves hot drinks and snacks between meals. Young people regularly contribute to both the planning and preparation of meals within the home. The recording of what each individual young person eats has also improved, this enables staff to be more aware of any dietary issues which the young people may have or develop whilst living in the home. Mealtimes are social occasions and are seen as an important part of daily life.

Young people's health and well-being are now being appropriately promoted by the staff within the home; each young person has a detailed health care plan on file, which includes all of the required information. The care company that owns this home has developed clear guidance

regarding promoting and safeguarding young people's health, these are known and followed by staff working in the home.

Staff take a pro-active approach to meeting young people's physical and emotional health needs. The health and care needs of young people are now identified and updated regularly. Young people are able to access appropriate services because the home is quick to respond to changing needs and circumstances. Young people's health needs are being well promoted because the home's records highlight the range of medical services that have been accessed. The manager acts as a strong advocate for the needs of young people in relation to accessing external advice and services. Young people are able to access therapeutic support to help them learn about and deal with specific emotional issues that are affecting their lives.

Young people's health and safety is also promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following pharmacy instructions in relation to the health needs of individual young people. Staff are able to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because they have access to first aid boxes and have been trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is further promoted by managers who monitor all accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are clearly benefiting from a service that now has an appropriate focus on safeguarding and protection matters. The home has a good range of operational policies and procedures that are now used effectively to promote the safety and welfare of young people. All of the maintenance issues raised on the home's last key inspection have been effectively addressed and the physical environment no longer constitutes a risk to the young people who live there or the staff who work within the home. The recording of incidents has improved and now follows the format described in the home's Statement of Purpose and the requirements of regulations.

Young people are now frequently and consistently engaged by staff in how to keep themselves and others safe. Young people benefit from living in a home where there are satisfactory arrangements in place to ensure staff are trained and well informed about how to them safe. Young people are protected because staff recognise and understand their role in child protection and they know what action to take if there are concerns.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected and promoted by all staff, however, this is appropriately tempered by the need to provide appropriate supervision and support. The home has appropriate policies in respect of staff entering young people's bedrooms and for conducting searches of these rooms when it is felt necessary to do so. Staff are sensitive and aware of the need to only disclose or share information that is needed to meet young people's needs.

The home ensures that all confidential records are kept securely and that there are appropriate arrangements in place for young people to receive and make telephone calls in private. Where restrictions or specific contact arrangements are in place these circumstances are discussed in review meetings and recorded in young people's files.

Young people understand how to make a complaint if they have any concerns about their care. Details about the home's complaints process is outlined in the children's guide and staff provide information and additional support if young people require this. The home's records confirm that young people have been able to access the complaints process and that this has resulted in an appropriate investigation of the complaints.

Young people's wellbeing is safeguarded because the home has clear child protection policies and procedures. All staff receive training in child protection and demonstrate a sound knowledge of these policies and procedures. Staff know what action they should take if they became aware of any child protection issue. All staff have access to a copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

The home has an anti-bullying policy which makes it very clear that bullying will not be tolerated and encourages young people to raise any concerns they have about bullying.

Staff are more aware of the types of behaviour the current young people may display and since the last inspection have formulated detailed assessments of risk, to help them manage these behaviours. All of the home's risk assessments are individual to the young people, are detailed and are up to date, with good evidence that they are regularly updated following incidents. Staff know how to respond to challenging behaviours and are try to encourage the young people to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour following incidents. This enables young people to learn how to help themselves to be safe and behave responsibly.

The home has a policy of not wishing to criminalise young people, as such police involvement in the home is minimal and only used as a last resort, when individuals safety is likely to be compromised. The emphasis of the home is to try to promote consistency and to improve behaviour through praise and reward. The home has appropriate policies in respect of staff using physical interventions. Policies support preserving individual safety and all staff receive training in such techniques as part of their care training.

The recording of physical interventions and sanctions has improved, with all of the recording formats being fully completed on each and every occasion. These are dated and signed by staff. Young people have now routinely been asked to comment on sanctions applied or when physical interventions have taken place, any refusal to comment is also recorded. Restraint records are now appropriately detailed with sufficient information to support that only agreed interventions are used. No unorthodox or unapproved holds are recorded. These records are now being regularly monitored by the home's registered manager, as required both by the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the NMS, to enable her to reflect on the effectiveness or appropriateness of these interventions.

There is a written policy and staff guidance on the actions that should be taken if a young person is absent from the home without consent. The procedures and guidance follow a regional joint protocol, which has been developed to ensure young people's safety is promoted. The protocol also ensures that reporting processes are followed according to individual risks and circumstances. Staff work with young people to minimise and prevent instances of absconding from the home, so that young people can be kept safe.

On inspecting the premises it was evident that all of the serious health and safety issues apparent on the last inspection have received appropriate attention. No new areas of concern are noted.

The previous concerns relating to the parent company's maintenance procedures and inability to appropriately prioritise significant health and safety issues appear resolved. All current maintenance requests appear to be dealt with quickly.

A new house motor vehicle has been provided and the old one has been appropriately disposed of and all issues in respect of dangerous substances for instance, broken glass, splintered wood and shed contents, have been removed from the home's garden, making this a facility that can be used by the young people safely. The home's oven has been replaced and all electrical wiring has been made safe.

Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards in the home. For example, records indicate that risk assessments are completed in relation to fire and potential environmental hazards. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment, emergency lighting and fire drills are regularly completed. The home's manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment and vehicles are checked to ensure they are safe to use. Young people live in a home which generally provides a satisfactory level of physical safety and security.

Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, as they are held centrally at the parent organisation's head office. These files were, however, examined on 23 June 2009. The organisation has a clearly defined recruitment process which protects young people by ensuring that all of the NMS requirements are met. The procedures are followed, prior to any staff member being deployed into any of their homes. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing and are well informed about their entitlements. The home has good arrangements and systems in place to manage allowances, personal needs and pocket money. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that young people maintain an appropriate stock of essential clothing. Young people are at liberty to save for special items of choice. Young people receive pocket money weekly and this is clearly recorded.

The physical environment in the home now meets the required standards. Furnishings and decoration have improved following the previous damage in the home, it is now a safe place to live. The home's current maintenance arrangements appear better able to respond promptly to breakages and damage which have significant safety implications. Young people currently live in an adequately furnished property which has good domestic style facilities.

The external appearance of the home and grounds has also been improved with all broken windows replaced and all potential hazards materials having been removed from the garden. Some external decoration is still required particularly to the front door porch area and the home's front hedge also requires some attention to stop it falling into the driveway.

Overall, this is now a homely and comfortable building, decorated and furnished to an adequate standard which creates a pleasant living environment for young people to enjoy in safety. The home provides the right environment to ensure the social and personal needs of each young person are being met.

The programme of maintenance, repair and re-decoration is ongoing and good systems are now in place to ensure that maintenance issues, particularly those with health and safety implications are rectified as a priority.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Generally this is a well managed home which contributes to the positive impact of the care and support young people receive. The home's manager provides good day-to-day support to individual shifts which are well informed about daily routines, events and the progress of each young person. Staff know and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service which is consistent with the home's Statement of Purpose. Young people are well informed about what the home does because staff take time to explain and describe its services to them. The home's registered manager has re-established an appropriate regime of regular monitoring of the home's key recording systems and has made sure that all staff receive adequate supervision in line the NMS.

The home's Statement of Purpose includes all information, as required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations. The young person's guide is presented in a child-friendly way and gives a good summary of what young people can expect from the home.

Young people are being looked after by a staff group that is relatively experienced, and enthusiastic but which still lacks the required level of qualifications in child care required by the NMS. There is a good emphasis given to staff training and development which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs. The shortfall in the home achieving the expected 80% of staff having completed their NVQ level 3 in childcare is due more to changes in personnel rather than by any lack of commitment to, or provision of, adequate training. The home's manager was able, however, to demonstrate that all staff currently deployed to the home, other than those currently undertaking their probationary employment are enrolled on suitable training courses.

Staff remain adamant that the home's registered manager provides them with clear and effective leadership regarding the aims and objectives of the service. The home's records clearly show that staff are now receiving appropriate individual support and that the home's recording systems and general practice are receiving the required degree of personal oversight and supervision by the manager to maintain good continuity of care.

The home is provided with good leadership and management as the current home's registered manager is dedicated and skilled, providing strong and effective leadership to the staff team and young people. The current home's manager is qualified to NVQ level 4 and is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care.

The staff rotas are flexible to meet the changing needs and circumstances of young people. There are clear and accountable systems in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the

manager. Good management systems are in place to share information between different shift teams. Young people are being nurtured and comprehensively supported because their needs are being met and risks are managed in a preventative way.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. All of the home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. The home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

Good systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of young people currently living in the home. The organisation has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the home's manager. The organisation conducts monthly review meetings to look at welfare issues within their homes. Records seen demonstrate that the content of these reports reflect an accurate picture of life for young people resident here. These reports are available to staff.

Young people's care files are very well organised to include all of the information detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential or third party information is kept in a separate section of the care file to enable the home to respond, in a timely manner, to any request made by a young person to read their care file.

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 as soon as possible that 80% of the staff deployed to the home have completed an NVQ Level 3 or equivalent qualification in childcare. (NMS 29.5)