

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	27 January 2010
Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Date of last inspection	25 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 children's home is split on two sites, the main house accommodating three young people whilst its satellite unit can accommodate one additional young person, giving a total for the registration of four young people aged between eight and 17 years of age.

Both the main house and the satellite are located in a small village near the outskirts of a small market town. Accommodation is provided on a domestic scale in a well-appointed detached family houses affording the young people individual bedrooms and ample communal space.

Both houses enjoy easy access to a range of recreational, social and sporting activities and there are regular bus services available within the nearby market town, enabling the young people, where appropriate, to develop their self-reliance and independency skills.

Summary

This was an unannounced interim inspection that concentrated on checking all key national minimum standards, under the Every Child Matters area of staying safe; it also followed up on one recommendation in the outcome of organisation from the home's previous key inspection on the 25 June 2009. Three young people are currently living in the main house with one additional young person living in the satellite home, only the main house was visited on this occasion.

This inspection confirmed that this home continues to be well managed. Young people benefit from living in an environment that is centred on meeting their individual needs. The home has well-established regimes in place for the effective assessment of risk and staff take all reasonable precautions to ensure that young people, staff and visitors are safe at all times. The overall judgement for the home on this inspection remains good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the last inspection supervision of staff has improved. Staff now receive supervision each month, which supports them to undertake their roles and increase their knowledge and competence. New members of staff receive fortnightly supervision and are supported through an induction programme.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are now clearly benefiting from a service that has a good focus on safeguarding and protection matters. The home has a good range of operational policies and procedures that are used effectively to promote the safety and welfare of young people. The home has good leadership that effectively promotes an environment where safety is acknowledged as important.

Young people are provided with a home that is safe. There is an appropriate awareness of young people's needs and the home's records reflect important information that is used to continually assess any risks.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality are respected by all staff. 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 has good policies in respect of staff entering young people's bedrooms and for conducting searches, however, these policies are not always followed and records do not always make it clear why staff have not invited young people to be part of the room search.

The home's acting manager has an active focus on community relationships to try to ensure that the home maintains an acceptable presence in the local area. Staff and young people are aware that unacceptable behaviour of any kind is not tolerated and will be challenged. Young people are able to raise concerns and complaints with staff through a well-advertised complaints procedure.

The home's acting manager manages complaints and concerns quickly and tries to resolve complaints in a manner young people both understand and can agree with. Records of complaints, both internal and external, have clearly identify outcomes.

The overall safety of the home is maintained by the review of any potential dangers through risk assessments that cover all aspects of daily living. These include the risk from fire hazards, from the behaviour of children and from recreation or outdoor activities.

Young people are protected from bullying by the vigilance of staff who are guided by clear policies and robust training. New staff are trained in safeguarding procedures during induction and staff demonstrated a thorough understanding of how to respond to allegations or disclosures of abuse.

The home follows its own policy and procedures regarding young people who leave the home without permission; these practices are also consistent with a wider police protocol. Young people are actively discouraged from having unauthorised absences and records demonstrated that procedures are being consistently followed. Young people's protection is underpinned by individual risk assessments and clear guidance to staff about what actions to take once a young person has left the home. The home's responses to this behaviour are comprehensively focused on the needs and risks of individual young people in terms of promoting their safety. Staff in the home are focused on developing supportive and consistent relationships that encourage alternative and safer ways of behaving.

Young people are encouraged to behave well, to establish, achieve and maintain levels of behaviour that are socially acceptable and that will sustain them in the wider community. The home's records not only detail sanctions used for poor behaviour but also positive consequences and rewards for behaviour that deserves congratulation and praise. Staff are acutely aware of the need to balance their interventions with positive feedback about young people's achievements, rather than on just punishing misdemeanours.

The home has good policies, procedures and staff guidance in respect of recording incidents, both those that happen in the home and those that happen outside in the community. These policies enable staff to recognise incidents that are significant, particularly if they include aspects of potential risk or harm to young people.

Positive steps are taken to keep young people, staff and visitors safe from fire and other hazards in the home. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment and emergency lighting, however, the fire alarm has not always been tested as frequently as required by regulation or as required by the home's own stated procedures. Fire drills are regularly completed including those held at night and with greater frequency than required, however, the home does not routinely conduct a fire drill following the admission of a new resident. Records show that young people do not always co-operate with these exercises, however, there is little to record or demonstrate how this refusal to follow drills has been responded to. The home has a comprehensive fire risk assessment, that has been updated with the required frequency, however, it hasn't been updated to take into account, risks presented by young peoples behaviours or when incidents of fire setting have taken place.

The home's acting manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment and vehicles are checked to ensure they are safe to use. Young people live in a home which provides a good level of physical safety and security.

The home has robust procedures in place for the monitoring of visitors to the home. Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, as they are held centrally at the organisation's head office. These files were, however, examined on 23 June 2009. The organisation has clearly defined recruitment process which protects young people by ensuring that all of the national minimum standards are met, prior to any staff member being deployed into any of their homes. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection and is followed in respect of all staff currently employed.

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 not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

All staff now receive supervision from a senior member of staff each month, which supports them to undertake their roles and increase their knowledge and competence. New members of staff receive fortnightly supervision and are supported through an induction programme. Regular team meetings are held, which ensures that the staff team understand priorities for working with young people and a consistent approach is delivered.

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):

- ensure that there is regular testing of emergency lighting, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that the home's fire risk assessment is amended whenever the home experiences an incident of fire setting to ensure that all risks are being appropriately managed (NMS 26.2)
- ensure that staff respect young people's wish for privacy and confidentiality as is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect the young person (this refers to young people's bedroom are only searched in accordance with the home's policies and procedures and that all such searches should be recorded in line with the home's stated policies and procedures). (NMS 9.1)