

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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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 located in a diverse area of a city. The home provides accommodation for four young people aged from 11 years to 17 years.

The home comprises two independent flats for young people's use and an adjoining unit for two young people living together and supported by staff.

Two young people currently live in this home and one of them was present during the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection all key standards were inspected. National Minimum Standard 6 in the outcome area of achieving economic well-being was not inspected on this visit. This is a good service, which provides two models of care within one property. Young people's welfare is enhanced by the good relationships that exist between staff and young people and between young people and their peers.

The home works closely with outside agencies to provide further support and guidance to young people. The home provides young people with a safe, secure and stable environment, which young people respond towards positively. The staff group is well established, experienced and all have the necessary qualification for working with young people.

Some improvements are needed in relation to sanction records, risk assessments and consent for medication.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection the registered manager was asked to ensure health plans were developed for all young people and complaint records include an outcome of any investigation. All young people have current health plans and outcomes of complaints are recorded. These steps ensure staff have relevant health information in respect of individual young people and outcomes of any complaint can be monitored. Two recommendations from the previous inspection have been carried forward following this inspection. These are in relation to medical consent and sanction records.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with suitable quantities of fresh food and vegetables. Daily records are maintained to monitor young people's food intake to ensure a balanced diet is provided. Young people are encouraged to assist staff in the purchasing, preparation and cooking of meals. This provides them with the knowledge they need prior to commencing a programme of independence training. Young people have the opportunity to experience foods from diverse cultures through eating out or preparing and cooking dishes themselves. All staff are trained in food hygiene and the home provides this training to young people, as part of independence training, to enable them to have a clear understanding of food hygiene and food safety.

Young people are registered with local health services and staff actively encourage them to attend routine health appointments. Young people receive a comprehensive health assessment and individual health plans are in place to inform staff of past and current health matters. For example, if young people require immunisations. Staff place a strong emphasis on the dangers associated with abusing alcohol and drugs. They provide young people with sound advice and bring in specialist services to support them, if needed. Young people are encouraged by staff to take more responsibility for their own health needs and welfare as they approach their preparation for independence training.

Young people are protected by the procedures trained staff follow for the storage, administration, recording and disposal of any medication brought into the home. Young people keeping and administering their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible to do so. They are able to safely keep their medication secure and away from other young people. Written risk assessments are in place for those young people who self medicate and staff monitor these closely, ensuring young people follow the instructions as specified on the pharmacy label. Suitable provisions are available for the administration of first aid and all staff are trained to administer emergency treatment safely. Written consent requested for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication has not been obtained for all young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected by staff. Young people have their own bedroom and key so they can secure their personal possessions. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of issues of confidentiality and protecting information, all of which is stored securely within the home. Young people say they know how to complain if they have issues with the care they receive in the home. The home's complaint procedure is effective and understood by staff and young people. Detailed records are maintained in respect of internal and external complaints received.

Young people are safeguarded as the home has clear policies and procedures in place and staff are aware of their responsibilities. Staff have received an appropriate level of training to enable them to recognise, respond and report suspicions of abuse. Staff say there have been no child protection concerns and young people confirm there have been no issues of bullying within the home in the period since the last inspection.

When young people abscond staff know what to do and follow agreed procedures. There are few instances of young people being absent from the home without authority. Records show in detail that these instances are mostly when young people have returned beyond their agreed return time. Staff know which appropriate authorities they must inform in relation to any significant event and records in respect of these are completed.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially accepted way through incentives set by staff. These are incorporated within young people's plans. Young people know their goals for achieving recognition and rewards. Records indicate a minimum use of sanctions imposed for inappropriate behaviour and there have been no restraints used. However, when sanctions are imposed young people do not have an opportunity to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them within the sanction records kept in the home. All staff are trained in behaviour management and safe restraint techniques.

All reasonable steps are taken to ensure young people, staff and visitors are safe from risk from fire. On arrival visitors are advised if there are to be any fire practices and shown the fire assembly point. Regular testing and recording takes place of the home's alarm system, fire prevention equipment and safe means of escape. Young people and staff take part in regular fire evacuation practices, some of which take place at night. All staff receive annual fire awareness training and are delegated responsibilities for health and safety matters within the home. The fire log provides confirmation of visits made by the local fire authority, who have assessed the home's fire safety systems to be broadly compliant and suitably maintained.

Ofsted has undertaken an audit of staff personnel files within the organisation in May 2009; any shortfalls found are being addressed by the provider. There are no recruitment issues within this home, staff looking after young people are safe to do so. Staff files contain the relevant recruitment checks. All visitors to the home sign in and out and young people are not left unsupervised with visitors entering the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive a high level of support from staff that meets their individual assessed needs. During discussions staff demonstrate they are fully aware of the needs of the young people and their routines. Key worker records show staff work with individual young people to achieve their target outcomes identified within their placement plans. Support is provided by people independent of the home and young people have access to the children's rights service. Young people's emotional health and social needs are promoted and specialist services are sought to help and provide them with guidance as and when required.

Young people are supported to take controlled risks relevant to the preparation of independence training and negotiating their place in the community. Individual significant risks are identified within placement plans. However, some risk assessments are from previous placements and need correction to be in line with young people's current placement and current identified risk.

Young people can access a range of recreational activities within the local community. Young people's time, in the main, is organised and arranged to enable them to participate in educational activities and building work projects, all of which contribute to the process of their transition into adulthood. Staff work closely with local education facilities to identify the most appropriate learning provision for young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs thoroughly assessed, planned for and reviewed effectively by staff. Written information is current, informative and clear. Plans are updated regularly and address any issues or support needed arising from disability, ethnicity, race, gender, faith or belief, and demonstrate young people receive appropriate external support.

Planning meetings and statutory reviews are held within required timescales. Young people can attend their meetings or speak with the independent reviewing officer in private. These arrangements ensure young people can influence the decisions made about their lives. Staff take notes of discussions, decisions and recommendations made at review, and in cases where young people do not attend their meeting, staff discuss with them the outcome.

Staff are good at consulting with young people and involving them in making decisions about their daily life and future. Young people have good opportunities to participate in the way in which the home is run. They regularly take part in key worker sessions and formal meetings with staff. Daily discussions add to the home's approach of ensuring young people are consulted.

Young people's contact arrangements are clearly defined within their plans. Where young people have no family contact, staff make sure that social networks are developed. Staff advocate on young people's behalf and arrange with their placing authority suitable arrangements for contact to take place.

New admissions to the home are considered for suitability through a thorough referral process. Consideration is taken on any likely impact they may have on the existing resident group, and equally the impact the resident group may have on a new admission. Discharges are well planned with suitable provision arranged through appropriate services.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is located in a diverse area of a city centre and takes into account the individual needs of young people. The home sets out to provide different types of accommodation. On one side of the house is a traditional type residential unit offering a family group type of placement and has two bedrooms. Whilst the other side of the house is made up of three self contained flats fully equipped for independent living. Two of the self contained flats are for young people's use. These two models of care work well and do not impact on each other and are both staffed accordingly to young people's specific needs.

The accommodation is decorated and furnished to a reasonable standard. This includes having an ongoing improvement programme to enhance facilities further. Toilet and washing facilities provide privacy and are sufficient to meet the needs of young people and staff.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The statement of purpose and children's guide documents describe how the home intends to meet young people's diverse needs. Young people's plans take account of gender, race, sexual orientation, culture, language, religious background and disability. Young people are valued by staff. The composition of staff is diverse and this provides young people with positive role models. Young people are encouraged to respect themselves and others, they are provided with the same equality of opportunity. Young people are made aware of the celebrations and festivities of their own and other communities.

The arrangements made for staff training, supervision and leadership are good. Young people are well supported by staff who are themselves supported through regular supervision, team meetings and refresher training. All staff have the relevant experience and qualifications for working with young people. The management arrangements are effective in ensuring the home is staffed in a manner that generally delivers good outcomes for young people.

The management team have a strong commitment and focus on improvement, including regular internal monitoring of the home's administration systems. External monitoring visits take place to assess the home's performance and to ensure that the home runs smoothly and that action

is taken to rectify any shortfalls identified. These systems ensure standards within the home remain good.

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):

- obtain, and retain on file, written permission from a person with parental responsibility for each young person, for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication (NMS 13.4)
- offer young people more opportunities for their views and feelings on care and control to be recorded in the records made by staff (NMS 22.14)
- ensure significant risks are identified and appropriate risk assessments recorded (NMS 7.9).