

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 provides modern and domestic accommodation, for a maximum of three young women. The house is located on the site of a secure estate but is an open house and is independently staffed and equipped and has its own extensive gardens.

Placements are arranged on a short term transitional basis, mainly for young women who have previously been placed within one of the secure units, located on site. The purpose of the home is to provide a more focused opportunity, a stepping stone, for young women to prepare for their next placement, in an open setting. The use of this house can also allow additional opportunities for increased levels of semi-independent living within a domestic setting.

The area is well served with local shops and community resources and the local town centre is approximately one and a half miles away and easily accessed by public transport. The home also has access to a car which young people use regularly.

Young people were present during this unannounced inspection visit and participated in the inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

During this unannounced inspection staying safe was examined and judged good. The three recommendations made at the last inspection in October 2009 were also discussed and good progress has been made. This demonstrates that the registered manager is responsive to taking appropriate action if shortfalls are identified, enabling the service to further improve outcomes for young people. One recommendation, relating to young people's individual risk assessments, was made following this inspection. This relates to a previous recommendation as there remains some shortfalls in this area.

The service continues to work well with young people to keep them safe and well. Staff work hard to prepare young people for their next placement, equipping them with knowledge and skills to keep themselves safe and manage new challenges.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection three recommendations were made. One of the recommendations related to the role of the Registered Manager who is responsible for both the secure and open settings. This situation has been eased by the

appointment of a new team leader at the open house and also by having a senior manager with designated responsibility for the open house. While the registered manager is aware of her overall management responsibilities in respect of the open setting, these arrangements have improved consistency and communications systems. The second recommendation related to the need for fire records to remain in the open house and for a senior member of staff to take responsibility for fire safety procedures and recording. These records are now maintained satisfactorily and were available for inspection. The final recommendation related to young people's risk assessments and while some improvements are evident, shortfalls remain. These were fully discussed during this inspection and a further recommendation has been made.

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.

The service has comprehensive policies and procedures in place to promote the safety and well-being of young people. Staff work hard to provide young people with support and knowledge to help them to develop personal responsibility for their own safety and well-being.

Staff promote the privacy of young people well and respect the right of young people to have information treated confidentially. Staff are mindful of the personal needs of young people, for example as they are maturing towards young adults, and work hard to support them in a way that respects their need for personal space and increasing independence.

There is an established and thorough complaints procedure that is well known to young people. Staff and young people have an open and positive rapport. Young people feel that any issues raised are responded to quickly and effectively.

The service has comprehensive safeguarding policies and procedures to support and protect young people. Staff are very knowledgeable and proactive in this area. A robust staff training programme provides staff with regular opportunities to do refresher training. Key worker sessions are used to good effect to enable young people to feel more confident and to develop knowledge, key skills and strategies to keep themselves safe.

There is a policy in place to counter bullying. Young people are provided with written information and have access to helpline telephone numbers. Key worker sessions cover issues around bullying and young people have access to a range of staff and independent visitors should they need to seek guidance or support.

Staff know what procedures to follow if a young person is absent without authority or fails to return home at the agreed time. The service has established good links with the police liaison officer and individual protocols are in place. Young people are aware of these protocols and why staff follow them. Staff also provide young people with opportunities to discuss their behaviour, the risks involved and other alternatives to going missing.

Young people are given clear boundaries and structure and know the standard of behaviour expected. Staff work hard to develop an open and positive rapport with young people, encouraging dialogue and respectful relations. An incentive scheme is in operation along with sanctions and reparation. Records relating to these are satisfactory.

The service provides a safe and comfortable domestic environment. Following a previous recommendation fire records are appropriately maintained. Young people have detailed risk assessments but shortfalls continue to exist in the quality of recording and particularly in identifying appropriate strategies to manage these risks and enable young people to make positive progress. For example staff regularly discuss pertinent issues in key worker sessions, which are recorded, but reference to this is not made in individual risk assessments.

An established staff selection and vetting procedure is in place. Since the last inspection there have been no new external appointments. All visitors to the service are also vetted. This supports the view that young people are protected within their home environment.

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 not judged.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the implementation and effectiveness of action identified as a result of individual risk assessments is regularly reviewed and appropriately recorded. (NMS 26.2)