

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC023736
Inspection date	19 November 2009
Inspector	Mark Blesky
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 March 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 service is a children's home for three young people who are aged between 12 and under 18 years old. The home is in a residential street in the seaside town within easy reach of local shops, amenities, the cinema, beach and public transport. The home has the appearance of a large family home and it is decorated and furnished to reflect this.

Summary

This is an unannounced key inspection. This is a good service with some outstanding features. Young people are kept safe and cared for by well managed care practices. Health needs are robustly met and staff ensure that the individual; and diverse needs of the young people are understood and met. Care planning and review are strong features in this home and staff work hard to form and maintain enduring relationships with the young people. Co-operation and respect is a fundamental aspect of this home and this ethos is reflected in the individual support provided to each young person. More work needs to be undertaken to develop independency programmes for the young people to assist them when they move on.

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 last inspection in March 2009 a requirement was made and the registered manager was asked to ensure that accurate and up-to-date records of measures of control used in the home were maintained.

Two recommendations were also made and the registered manager was asked to ensure detailed records of sanctions used in the home were kept, along with written records maintained of the circumstances of all incidents of absconding.

Details of the methods used for control are now recorded in a detailed and comprehensive manner. Where sanctions are imposed on young people following negative behaviour, staff complete detailed records of the event leading to the sanction and details of the action taken. A review of the action taken following a young person being absent without permission has now taken place. When young people go missing, the staff now record all salient details and any reasons given by the young person for leaving the home. The registered person has taken appropriate steps to improve the quality of the home for young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are able to choose from a range of healthy and nutritious well prepared meals. All menu planning is conducted with the young people and they are able to state their likes, dislikes and choices. Young people say that staff meet with them regularly at house meetings and during day-to-day contact to discuss meals. Menus are then planned and placed around the home. If a young person does not want the home's main meal, an alternative meal may be prepared. All staff receive training in healthy living and instruction on promoting healthy and balanced diets. Staff work hard to ensure that high standards of food and meals are prepared for the young people.

Well managed healthcare planning and treatment support young people's day-to-day and more specialised health needs. All staff members receive training and instruction in first aid and medicine administration and handling. Young people's health records are comprehensive and up-to-date and all young people are registered with routine health services as soon as they become resident in the home. Each young person has a dedicated and extremely detailed health profile, which details the most salient elements of their healthcare needs along with diverse needs.

Medical administration records are very well maintained with each young person's healthcare treatment recorded in a dedicated record. Appropriate policy and procedures are in place to ensure dosages of medication are closely monitored and an audit trail of administration is present. Medication is kept securely and safely in a robust storage area.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people say that staff respect them and value their rights to privacy and confidentiality. Young people's information is only discussed with them and no other young person is allowed access or any details of their private lives. Staff knock on young people's doors before entering their rooms and young people's contact with friends and family can be conducted in private. Staff are aware of the need to ensure young people have appropriate privacy and strive to achieve this.

Robust procedures are in place to address any complaint or representation made by a young person. All staff receive training in this important area and are aware of the need for detailed recording of any incident. Procedures that are in place ensure that the complainant is met and kept informed of the process of any complaint and a meeting is set up with the young person at the conclusion of the matter. Additional procedures are in place if the young person is not satisfied with the outcome. Young people say that they typically make verbal complaint and see little reason to make a written record. They say that if the matter was more important or a concern to them they would seek to make the complaint in writing. All young people were aware of their rights to make complaint and to seek external support if they wished this. The procedures in place are details comprehensive and of a very good standard.

Well managed safeguarding procedures are in place in this home. Practice is of high standard and records are well maintained. The home's safeguarding policies and guidance mirror that of the local authority and the home has a named child protection and safeguarding co-ordinator. In addition the home maintains a call out service and out of hours team that can be called upon for advice and support. All staff receive mandatory training in this area with refresher training planned regularly.

Anti-bullying procedures are in place to counter any bullying, discrimination or victimisation. A separate procedure is in place to specifically consider bullying. Any incidents that appear to have characteristics of bullying are recorded and reported separately. The manager ensures that vigilance from all staff is maintained and staff members discuss bullying in staff meetings and young people's meetings. Young people say that staff do not tolerate bullying and treat any such episodes very seriously. Anti-bullying procedures are insightful and extremely well managed.

Young people that go missing or leave the home without permission are supported by well planned and effective responses. Procedures for staff include the searching, reporting, and recovery of any missing child. Upon a young person's return staff try and ascertain why the young person went missing and consider methods to counter any reoccurrence. Young people say that staff will meet with them and sit down and talk to them about why they have been missing.

When young people behave in a negative manner staff will use agreed methods of behaviour control and this may include approved sanctions. Recording of such events includes a consideration of the effectiveness of any control or sanction used. The manager oversees all methods of behaviour control and these matters are discussed in staff meetings. Young people say that the sanctions are fair and although they may not like them, they are reasonable. Young people say that they are always warned when their behaviour is unacceptable and given an opportunity to modify their conduct.

Health and safety and fire safety is robustly maintained in this home. Regular fire drills and evacuation take place and risk assessment is comprehensive in all key areas of the home. Each young person is risk assessed regarding the environmental and situational hazards present. In addition, the staff consider how the young person's known behaviour may impact on such risk. The resulting risk assessment is comprehensive and insightful providing reduction of known hazards. All checks on appliances, electrical installations are maintained within their statutory timescales.

Staff records are generally well managed with appropriate checks and comprehensive checking of references and qualifications. Files are orderly, legible, easy to navigate and kept up-to-date. Careful selection and vetting is carried out with detailed records of interviews and observations. Staff work hard to maintain these records and this is evident by the attention to detail in this area. It was noted that some minor discrepancies were present although this had minimal impact on the overall process. All visitors to the home are strictly monitored and must sign in and out of the building. No visitor is allowed unsupervised access to the building or a any young person. There is robust security in place to keep the building secure.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All young people benefit from staff that provide them with both general day-to-day support and more individualised key working sessions. Key working provides each young person with an opportunity to meet individually with a staff member and discuss any matters they wish. The key worker also identifies specific areas for discussion related to the care plan and records this discussion. Young people say that they value key working and use this opportunity to talk about anything that is on their mind, worries or more day-to-day matters. Young people say that key working provides them with special time. They say that this is a time when they know that they are listened to and that staff are trying to help them work things out.

House meetings also provide support to the young people and house meetings are the opportunity when young people are able to raise collective or group issues. Staff will also use house meetings to share information or gather views on a range of matters. Young people say that they are able to influence the home and their care during these meetings.

Young people are supported in their education by well managed systems of support. Staff ensure that young people are ready and equipped for school and transport is provided. Each young person has a dedicated education document within their file, which details their educational planning, needs and records the young people's achievements. The staff, typically the key worker, visit and liaise with the education provider and attend parental consultation evenings and open days. It was noted that whilst much support is in place for supporting the education systems, there is little evidence of day-to-day support with learning and study within the home. Homework is not effectively monitored in the home and promotion of learning and education is rather unclear.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Care planning is very well managed and supported in this home. Care plans for all young people are clear, detailed, and comprehensive. Care plans are regularly updated to reflect the statutory reviews and also to detail any changes in circumstance. In addition to the care plan and placement plan, the home has developed a 24 hour management plan. This is an extremely detailed and individualised document that considers both the day-to-day care and also the diverse care needs of each young person. These plans demonstrate a very high standard of support in care planning and delivery.

Reviews are carried out for each young person and these reviews are in accordance with the placing authorities guidelines. A review report is provided for each young person prior to the review to detail progress and a host of other important information. These reports reflect the same high standards of the care planning and provide each review with comprehensive and detailed information, essential to the review.

Contact is supported for each young person in the home. Staff will either provide transport or make the necessary arrangements to help a young person achieve their contact. Where contact is supported by the home staff, detailed records are kept of the contact and the progress of the contact session. Staff will provide observation and also analysis and emotional support for the young person. Young people say that staff encourage them to make and keep contact with friends and family and contact is a regular discussion topic at key working sessions. Staff are aware of the importance of promoting contact and are guided in this area by specific practice guidance and training.

Young people say that they are consulted when any new placement is made in the home and their views are canvassed. Placements are typically planned and any young person is introduced to the other young people and may stay for a meal and talk with the young people and staff. In an emergency, the home carries out a review of the placement within 72 hours. Young people that leave the home are supported by all staff and specifically their key worker.

House meetings are regularly held and these meetings give the young people the opportunity to voice their collective and group views. Young people say that staff will listen to their views and often a discussion takes place to find solutions to issues. Staff will also use this opportunity to pass information to the young people and listen to their views or opinions. Records are kept of all house meetings and the manager monitors these documents regularly.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Independency planning has been started in the home, but as yet clear plans have not emerged. Workbooks that detail life skills and competencies are detailed and comprehensive. However, at this stage, plans are not in place and young people are likely to be disadvantaged by this lack of clear planning.

Young people are able to shop and buy clothes and personal possessions of their choice. Young people say that staff will support any reasonable request they make and staff will accompany them if appropriate. Young people are therefore able to express themselves in the manner in which they dress and can also decorate their bedrooms to their own taste. All young people receive pocket money based on their age and they are encouraged to save money each week. All young people have an adequate supply of cosmetics, which the home will purchase for them.

The home is well maintained in both the common areas and the young people's bedrooms. Decoration is of high standard and the furniture in all areas is of high quality. The whole house is pleasant and staff have created a family atmosphere, similar to that of a large family home. This home provides adequately for the young people accommodated and in accordance with the homes services and provisions detailed in the statement of purpose

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home has a written Statement of Purpose and a children's guide, which accurately describe what the home sets out to do for the young people accommodated and the manner in which care is provided. All staff receive supervision at the required frequency and duration in accordance with the national minimum standards.

Supervision is structured and focussed providing each staff member with a clear supervisory evaluation. Appropriate subjects are identified by the supervisor and these sessions provide assessment of the staff members performance used in the six monthly evaluation. Staff may bring any matter to supervision and the supervisor will ensure that records are made of all discussions.

All staff have appropriate job descriptions relative to their role and responsibilities. All staff are supported by appropriate training, which is identified and implemented to ensure that staff are able to meet the needs of the young people. There are five staff in the home and four staff have achieved the National Vocational Qualification in caring for children and young people level three or equivalent. This home has therefore achieved an 80% number of qualified staff.

There are sufficient numbers of experienced staff to meet the needs of the young people both day and night. In the event of a more urgent need for extra staff, an call support is provided. In addition, the home also has an out of hour's service for supervisory support and guidance. Adequate provision is in place to support each staff shift.

An independent person visits the home once each month and carries out checks on the home's daily log, records of complaints, disciplinary measures. In addition, checks are carried out on the use of restraint, assessment of the physical condition of the building, furniture, and equipment of the home. Following the visits, a report is presented to the manager and provider and an action plan is set to address any shortfalls in service or provision. The manager carries out appropriate action following this report and this is overseen by the area manager for the

home. In addition, the manager carries out monitoring of the home in accordance with regulation 34. Action is taken by the manager to improve or adjust provisions where necessary.

The home is financially sound and well maintained. Adequate funds are available for the day-to-day needs of the young people and staff in accordance with the home statement of purpose. The manager is suitably qualified and has many years of relevant experience.

Each child has a permanent private and secure record of their history and progress, which can, be seen by the child and by the child's parents as appropriate.

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 all young people have an independency plan and are assisted in learning the skills necessary to move smoothly into independence (National Minimum Standards 6)
- ensure that young people are provided with support and facilities that are conducive to study and to do homework and are actively encouraged and supported in doing so (National Minimum Standards 14)