

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Mark Blesky
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	11 December 2008
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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 which can provide accommodation and care for three children aged between 11 and under 18 years. It is situated in a residential area close to a seaside town. There is a shopping parade close by and there is easy access to other local amenities. There are good rail and bus links with towns schools and colleges.

Summary

This is an unannounced inspection. This is a good home with all outcome groups reaching a good standard. Young people's welfare is maintained by well-managed systems of care. Strong and supportive relationships have been achieved in this home, and young people feel that their relationships are one of the best features. The acting manager has clear philosophies on standards of care and the success of this combination is evident in the report. Staff are supported and well-managed with regular supervision and appraisal. Some areas need increased development and attention to enhance existing care practices. Key working details some very good examples of support, but other examples are less focused and unclear. Independence planning needs increased focus to provide young people with the necessary skills for moving 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 December 2008, two recommendations were made. The registered person was asked to ensure that the dates of records, dealing with recorded events including behaviour management plans are included. Dates and times have now been added to all documents, and records of events.

A recommendation was also made to ensure that 80 per cent of the staff members were qualified to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. Training continues for staff members with completion anticipated. Due to the longer term nature of this training this is on course, but currently not completed. Therefore, further recommendation is made at this inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

All young people benefit from good quality nutritious foods. Young people have a range of choices of meals and they are able to express individual preferences in discussion with the staff. Young people also have a more formal opportunity during house meetings to express their collective views about the meals. Young people say that they make staff aware of their likes and dislikes and the staff ensure that this is taken into account when the menus are planned. All staff undertake mandatory healthy living training which includes healthy eating and diet. Menus are currently being reviewed to ensure that they are bright and colourful with pictures of the food on offer and available to the young people.

Health records are maintained for all young people. All routine, planned and specialist health interventions are well-managed and up to date. Health records also contain known health

conditions, immunisations and information about allergies. These files, in the main, are well-presented. It was noted that a more recent placement did have significant gaps in records and documentation. Whilst it is acknowledged that information can take sometime to obtain, this information should have been obtained or a date for receiving this agreed at referral stage.

Medication is stored securely in a metal cabinet affixed to the office wall, and all staff must be authorised to access this. All staff receive mandatory training in handling medicines and medication administration. The medication records are robustly managed and ensure that young people are administered medication effectively. It was noted that one topical remedy had been used but not labelled, which does not support effective contamination precautions. In addition, a prescribed drug for a young person that had since left, remained in the cabinet which should have been disposed of.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people say that the staff are respectful of their rights to privacy and ensure that they are able to spend time alone. A telephone is provided in order that young people can speak in private and postage material is available for young people wishing to write to friends and family. The home maintains specific guidance for the staff to ensure that they are aware of the importance of respect for privacy and confidentiality.

Complaints are uncommon in this home, and the acting manager believes this is because young people and staff have supportive and trusting relationships with one another. This is echoed by the young people who say that staff are always prompt to resolve and day-to-day disputes or complaints. Young people say that they will only use the more formal complaints system if the complaint is serious or they are unsatisfied with the informal measures taken. The acting manager demonstrates an insightful view about dealing with complaints and this is supported by successful practices.

Clear and detailed safeguarding procedures are maintained in the home. These procedures are written to reflect the local authority procedures. Each staff member undertakes specific training in safeguarding as part of his or her induction and through specific, dedicated training. The child protection and safeguarding co-ordinator is in regular contact with the home and all incidents of this nature are appropriately monitored.

The young people say that bullying does not happen in this home and there have been no recorded incidents of bullying. However, training is maintained in this important area, and this topic is discussed in team meetings and children's meetings.

Absconding has been occasioned in this home, but clear procedures are in place to counter such behaviour. Procedures include the prompt searching, reporting, and recovery of any young person that goes missing. In addition, the parent company have an out-of-hours call out system and extra staff can be deployed in circumstances that are more urgent.

The home manages behaviour by using approved sanctions and all staff receive training regarding behaviour control. The acting manager strives to avoid sanctions and encourage young people to think about their actions as an alternative to applying a sanction. To this end staff are not allowed to apply a sanction without first gaining the acting managers agreement, day or night. Although this arrangement appears rather unusual, outcomes have typically been positive.

There may, however, be a risk that staff members may feel undermined by having to seek permission of the manager before they are able to use appropriate behaviour management control. This system also strays away from the home's written procedures, training and common practices of behaviour control.

Risk assessments are carried out in key areas of the young people's care and clearly related to known behaviour. In addition, risk assessments consider situational and environmental factors that may impact on risk. Risk assessment in many cases is well-managed and presented clearly. In other cases, it was somewhat vague, unsubstantiated and had not been updated to address significant changes that impact on the likelihood of risk.

Staff files are maintained in the home contain staff supervision and salient details about the staff member's employment. The acting manager retains the more detailed staff files in the human resources department at the company's head office and confirms these are kept in accordance with the national minimum standards.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All young people are provided with individual support from staff members. Each young person is appointed a key worker who will meet regularly with them on a one-to-one basis. Key working sessions provide the young person and staff member with an opportunity to discuss the broad aims of the care plan, along with more specific day to day matters. Young people say that key working sessions are important to them and that they enjoy having this special person to talk their views over. All key working sessions are recorded and the young person is asked to read and sign the record of the meeting. Records detail the meeting and provide some good examples of the session and some very useful analysis of the discussed topic. However, some records are somewhat vague and provide limited information of the session.

Support is provided for all young people with their education. Staff liaise with the schools effectively and make visits to the schools for open days and parental consultation days. Young people are provided with encouragement to complete homework and staff ensure that quiet space, and materials are available to them. All young people have dedicated education files, which include personal education planning and these are well maintained and up to date. The acting manager has just implemented more formal recording of school liaison and visits to ensure all staff are aware of the young people's progress in their education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Care planning is well-managed with each young person supported with clear placement planning. In addition, each young person has a 24 hour management plan. This document breaks down the broader aims of the placement plan into day-to-day aims. This plan is detailed and comprehensive and addresses diverse needs, behaviours, and lifestyle choices. The 24 hour management plan is a well-managed system of support and complements the formal care planning process. Young people say that staff understand their needs and treat them as individuals. They say that staff know the things that are important to them and the things that can upset them. Young people say that one of the best elements of the home is the staff care.

Care plans are reviewed at the required frequency. Before a review takes place, the key worker will meet with the young person. This meeting is used to discuss the impending review and discuss the review report that is to be written on behalf of the young person and presented at the review. Young people are accompanied at the review by their key worker and supported through this process.

Contact with friends and family is promoted and encouraged for all young people and staff will provide the transport or finance to achieve this. The staff also provide emotional support to ensure that the contact is progressing as intended. When contact is supervised, the staff will record their observations and where appropriate record their analysis of the event. Contact is a regular subject in key working sessions.

All planned placements are discussed with the young people and all staff members. Views are canvassed and considered in all new placements and the young people can formally express their views in the house meetings. In the event of an emergency placement, the staff and the young people are spoken to prior to the 72 hour review to express their views.

House meeting take place regularly and generally weekly. This is the opportunity for young people to express collective views about the home and their care. Staff will also use this opportunity to share information and seek views on matters concerning the home. Records are kept of these meeting, recording the salient elements of the meeting. There are, however, limited examples of discussion between staff and the young people in these records. More examples may have provided better evidence of views, discussions and expressed opinions.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Independence planning has begun in this home and the assessments of the young people are emerging. The home is using a comprehensive assessment booklet that details a wealth of areas where young people need to develop. Individual, diverse and community subjects are covered in this detailed booklet. Whilst assessment is underway, there is little evidence of goals and targets and detail of the work to be undertaken. In the absence of this detail, there is little evidence of effective independency planning. More work is needed in this important area and due to the age of these young people, this should be addressed expeditiously.

Young people say that they are provided with all the clothes and personal items that they need. They are encouraged to save for items that they would like and are expensive. They say that they are able to decorate their bedrooms generally how they wish, but add that staff will remind them if they become untidy or in need of redecoration. All young people receive pocket money, and say that that staff members encourage them to save.

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. The statement of purpose was last reviewed in July 2009 where minor amendments were made to reflect staff changes.

There are adequate numbers of staff members to manage the home in accordance with the needs of the young people and the statement of purpose. All staff are appropriately managed and the acting manager carries out performance appraisals each year. Training programmes are regularly discussed in supervision, and both the staff members and the acting manager look at the practice needs and abilities of staff performance. All staff receive supervision in accordance with the national minimum standards. Staff say that they feel supported by this process and see this as a vital part of their development.

There are five staff working in the home and only one has currently achieved their National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in caring for children and young people. It is acknowledged that there have been new staff recently employed, however, this is below the minimum level recommended by the national minimum standards. The acting manager confirmed that the remaining staff members are enrolled in appropriate training to achieve this award.

The home is staffed day and night and the parent company can deploy extra staff in cases where there is an emergency or more urgent need. In the absence of the acting manager, there are clear structures of management and an on call service to provide support for the home.

All staff undertake induction training and ongoing training as part of their development programme. Refresher training and specific training is also provided where staff have to meet specific or more diverse needs. Regulation 33 visits and checks are carried out by an external staff member. These visits provide comprehensive inspection reports on the operation of the home and the key areas of performance. Following this visit an action plan is provided for the manager and the area manager to address any shortfalls or areas for development. This process is effective and well-managed. In addition, Regulation 34 monitoring is undertaken by the acting manager to determine if there is any undesirable concentration, trend, or pattern affecting the home. In such cases, the acting manager takes action to improve the safeguarding and promotion of the welfare and the quality of care in the home.

Young people's files are well-maintained, up-to-date and contain the appropriate information. Each file is separated into sections making navigation easy. All files are locked in the office when not in use and staff ensure that the young people's information is handled sensitively and confidentially.

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
13	ensure that there are suitable arrangements for the recording, handling, safekeeping, safe administration and disposal of any medicines received into the home (Regulation 21)	16 December 2009
26	ensure that risk assessment is effectively managed and unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children	16 December 2009

	accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23)	
6	ensure each young person is provided with effective independency planning. (Children Act 1989, Sections 22,61,64)	16 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure adequate procedures are in place to ascertain medical information for young people (National Minimum Standards 12)
- ensure staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour, and where the behaviour of children is regarded as unacceptable by staff, it is responded to by constructive, acceptable and known disciplinary measures approved by the registered person (National Minimum Standards 22)
- ensure adequate recording of key working sessions is maintained to provide effective individual support for young people (National Minimum Standards 7,8)
- ensure significant views, discussions and expressed opinions are recorded in house meeting records (National Minimum Standards 8)
- ensure that 80% of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification in caring for children and young people level three or equivalent (National Minimum Standards 29)