

Inspection report for children's home

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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

The home is one of three care homes provided by the company. It is a three bedroom, mid-terrace property located in a residential area, close to public transport, shops and leisure facilities. The home is registered to provide accommodation for up to three young people aged from 11 to 17 years on admission. Young people occupy single bedrooms. Care provided by the home has an emphasis on supporting young people to develop skills for independent living and the younger age range have not recently been accommodated in the home.

Summary

This was a key unannounced inspection at which all relevant key standards were inspected. The progress the home has made with previously set actions and recommendations were also assessed. This is a satisfactory home, providing a sound level of care to the young people. Outcomes for individual young people are acceptable and demonstrate care that generally meets their individual needs. All three young people currently resident in the home were present during the inspection and invited to give their views.

This inspection has resulted in five actions and five recommendations. The former relate to the need for the home to ensure that it accurately records medication administered to the young people; that it evidences that health care appointments are arranged and attended; to ensure that it appropriately notifies Ofsted of incidents; to ensure that it maintains a sanction log in accordance with the regulations; and that it has in place risk assessments, including for fire safety and substances hazardous to health, and that these are regularly reviewed. The recommendations relate to keyworking; the sanction and restraint logs; personal education plans; staff training and quality assurance.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The previous inspection resulted in six actions and one recommendation. The latter, which referred to the need to improve the maintenance of the garden has been met. The requirements related to health promotion and the need to evidence that health care appointments are made and attended; recording of sanctions; monitoring fridge and freezer temperatures; staffing levels at times of crises; staff training and menu choices. Action has been taken with regard to all of these with the exception of health care appointments. The unmet requirement has been repeated in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people are encouraged to enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. The aim of this home is to promote semi independence skills, and with this in mind the young people are assisted to plan for, shop and prepare their own meals. The menu plans are repetitive, however staff stated that they were based upon each young person preference. Even with staff assistance, the records of meals taken indicates that the young people have a preference for convenience foods. Staff are mindful of this, and to counterbalance this they

will, in consultation with the young people, prepare a meal for everyone each evening. Staff have undergone training in food hygiene.

Staff try to promote a healthy environment for all of the young people. They are registered with local general practitioners and other community based health services. Records of health appointments made and attended were not up to date, making it difficult to evidence how much support was being provided. Issues were raised in looked after children health check-ups but it was not possible to determine if these had been followed up. The local authority care plans provided for the young people include a small section regarding health. This is reviewed in conjunction with the rest of the care plan at the statutory looked after children reviews. Staff can refer to policies and procedures relating to health promotion. The young people are provided with guidance regarding the use of alcohol, drugs and smoking.

The welfare of the young people is not as safeguarded as it could be in relation to the administration of medication. The recording of such to the young people is confusing. Staff are using two different recording sheets, and neither one in a consistent manner, making it impossible in some cases to determine if accurate dosages have been given at the appropriate times. Correction fluid has also been inappropriately used on the recording sheets. Staff can refer to a medication administration policy and procedure, and a number of them have been trained in first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young peoples' privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Staff are guided by appropriate policies and procedures and the young people are informed of their right to privacy, confidentiality and personal space in the guide to the home.

The young people know how to complain if the occasion arose. The complaints procedure is outlined in the young peoples' guide and is also in the home's Statement of Purpose. There have not been any recorded complaints since the last inspection.

The safeguarding of the young people is promoted. There are systems in place to protect the young people from abuse and these are known and understood by the staff. The home has its own in-house child protection procedures and staff can also refer to the London wide safeguarding manual. There is written guidance for staff which makes it clear the ways in which the registered person of the home will deal with any allegations against them. There have not been any reported child protection concerns since the last inspection.

The young people are protected from bullying by staff applying the robust procedures. It is made clear in the young people's guide that bullying will not be tolerated. Staff have historically taken positive action to deal with bullying, including removing a young person from the home. The current residents stated that they were not being bullied and had not been subject to any bullying.

Young people who are absent without permission are protected in accordance with written guidance. This guidance makes it clear that on their return the young person must be welcomed and staff should determine their wellbeing. Staff liaise with the local law enforcement officers with regard to the reporting system for young people who abscond.

Staff encourage and reward good behaviour and are constructively critical towards inappropriate behaviour. Positive boundaries are created and maintained. House rules are in place and are discussed with each young person on admittance to the home. The home has a policy of no restraint, and staff have clear procedures to follow in the event a young person behaves in an aggressive manner, including leaving the home unstaffed. In line with the national minimum standards the home does nonetheless maintain a restraint log, in addition to a sanction log. Neither of these logs were individually numbered as is stated in the national minimum standards. Just one sanction has been imposed since the last inspection, it was appropriate. Staff are not recording sanctions in the manner prescribed in the regulations.

The young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. Positive steps are taken to keep staff and young people safe from the risk of fire. The fire detection system undergoes periodic maintenance, and the alarms are tested on a weekly basis. Two fire drills have been performed this year. There is a fire risk assessment in place, although it has not been reviewed for a year. Generic health and safety risk assessments are in place and are up to date, with the exception of risk assessments relating to substances hazardous to health, which were not available. Portable electrical equipment is tested annually, and the electrical wiring was examined two years ago. A current gas safety certificate is in place. Refrigerator and freezer temperatures are recorded daily, whilst the temperature of the refrigerators in the young people's bedrooms are tested weekly. A maintenance log is kept, and whilst this evidenced that repairs were being dealt with, the speed of response could not be determined as completion dates were not included in the log. The home has a current insurance certificate on display.

The selection and vetting of new staff was not assessed on this visit as the manager stated that there had not been any new staff employed since the last key inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are given support in line with the needs identified in their care plans. They prepare a monthly report which outlines, under the Every Child Matters outcome groups, the progress, or otherwise, of each young person. Some reports do not contain much evaluative comment, or set out targets and goals for the coming month. The deputy manager explained that goals and targets are normally added by him after the report has been prepared by the keyworker.

The young people's guide to the home contains a section about advocates, explaining what their role is. The guide provides the telephone numbers for national children's charities, and advise the young people to contact them if they wish to have an advocate.

Each of the young person's files examined contained a risk assessment, and the young people are supported to take controlled risks commensurate with their age and understanding.

Staff are clear that the education of the young people is promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Two of the young people are hoping to commence college in the Autumn, whilst one is still of school age. Reviews of personal education plans were seen for two of the young people but the actual plans themselves were not on file. Where necessary, keyworkers (if they are not the member of staff on duty) will come into the unit to support the young people with specific educational work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people have their needs assessed and these are set out in the care plans provided by the placing authority. These are supplemented by in-house care plans. As mentioned in the previous section, there is little evidence of the work the staff are doing with the young people to achieve their goals.

Each young person is allocated a keyworker who monitors their care plan. It was difficult to evidence how well this system worked in practice as neither of the young people's files inspected contained recent keyworking records. The young people are able to approach any member of staff with personal concerns, not only their keyworker.

The young people's needs are reviewed on a regular basis through the looked after children statutory review process. Until recently the home contributed a pre-review report however changes in the requirements of placing authorities has led to a temporary halt in this good practice whilst new report proforma are being drafted. The young people are invited to attend their review, and some chose to take part in the process.

The young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. There is an information sheet in each young person's file which states if there are any restrictions in place regarding contact.

There are procedures in place for introducing young people to the home, the staff and the other young people living there. The home's expectations are clearly outlined in the guide and the house rules, both of which are given to new arrivals. If appropriate, the home can continue to provide an outreach service to young people when they leave. Their key worker will maintain regular contact and provide ongoing support.

The young people are encouraged to participate in the day to day running of the home. House meetings are held and minutes recorded. The record indicated that the last meeting has been in May. This was raised with the deputy manager who stated that often the young people refuse to attend. Staff regularly consult with the placing authorities and their views are taken into account in the development of the service provided.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

None of the young people currently in placement at this home are of an age where a pathway plan has been commenced. Staff are aware of such plans and the importance of liaising with the placing authorities to ensure that they are provided at the appropriate time.

The accommodation is of a homely nature, and is decorated, furnished and maintained to a satisfactory standard. Each young person has their own room which they can personalise according to their own taste. They share a pleasant lounge and a very small kitchen, which is too small to provide any dining facility. The three young people share a bathroom and toilet, and there is an additional toilet that staff and visitors can use. The rear garden has been revamped and provides a pleasant area to sit out in and enjoy the good weather.

The young people are permitted to use the office telephone for private calls, and they also receive top-ups for their mobile telephones.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The staff team reflects a variety of ethnic backgrounds, and staff assist the young people to prepare culturally reflective meals. Should a young person wish to follow a religion, this is supported. Staff are guided by policies and procedures including those referring to equal opportunities; meeting racial needs; challenging discrimination and meeting linguistic, spiritual, emotional, educational and special needs.

The home's Statement of Purpose contains the information required in the regulations and provides a guide to the services provided and how the home operates. It is in a format that can be understood by placing social workers, staff and any parent or person with parental responsibility. Accompanying it is a well presented young peoples guide, which is appropriate for the age and understanding of the young people.

The young people receive the care and services they need from a care team of whom over 70% have achieved a National Vocational Qualification level three award. This percentage is a little below that stated in the national minimum standards. There are clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the registered persons absence. The Registered Manager also oversees the other homes owned by the provider, and therefore the day to day management is largely left up to the deputy manager. Staff receive regular supervision and an annual appraisal. It was not possible to view these records as they were in a locked cabinet to which the deputy manager did not have a key. Staff can access a range of policies and procedures. There is no evidence that these are regularly reviewed.

The home is staffed at all times day and night, usually by one person. The home's Statement of Purpose makes it clear that this is the normal anticipated staffing level, with additional staff coming in if the needs of the young people require it and the placing authorities will fund it. The deputy manager confirmed that there is always a manager on call, and one who could if necessary reach the home within thirty minutes. The deputy manager stated that the provider did not feel that this arrangement created an unnecessary level of risk to either young people or staff. There is a written statement in place to support this.

The young people are looked after by staff who have been enabled to undergo a variety of training since the last key inspection. This includes manual handling, first aid, food and hygiene, child protection, communication with young adults and report writing. Staff can refer to a policy and procedure manual, albeit this did not appear to have been reviewed for some time.

The care of the young people accommodated in the home is monitored to a degree. The deputy manager provided a list of monitoring checks that he periodically carries out, but there is little evidence to support the degree to which this was being done. The home is visited on a monthly basis and a report written. These were available for inspection.

Each young person has a permanent, private and secure record of their history and progress. A file is maintained for each in which staff record the young people's needs, development and

progress. Mention has been made elsewhere in this report of the areas in recording which fall below a satisfactory level.

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
10	promote and protect the health of young people accommodated in the home by evidencing health care appointments arranged and attended (Regulation 20 (1))	10 August 2010
13	keep an accurate record of all medication, prescribed and non-prescribed (Regulation 21 (1))	20 July 2010
22	ensure that the sanction log is maintained in accordance with the matters set out in Regulation 17 (Regulation 17 (4)(a,b,c,d,e,f,g))	20 July 2010
20	notify without delay the relevant persons or agencies of the matters set out in Schedule 5 in particular a serious illness or accident sustained by a child accommodated in the home (Regulation 30 (1))	20 July 2010
26	ensure risk assessments, including those relating to fire and substances hazardous to health, are in place and regularly reviewed (Regulation 23)	10 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure keyworking is carried out at regular intervals and that this can be evidenced (NMS 7.1)
- number individual pages in both the restraint and sanction logs (NMS 22.9)
- ensure the home has a copy of a personal education plan for each young person (NMS 14.2)
- ensure that there are systems in place to monitor the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose, and that these can be evidenced (NMS 33.1)
- ensure that the number of care staff with a National Vocational Qualification level three award meets the criteria set out in the National Minimum Standards (NMS 29.5).
- ensure that the policies and procedures are reviewed at regular intervals (NMS 28.8)