

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Elisabeth Brunton
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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 provides single room accommodation for young people aged 14 to 17 years on admission. There is a small shared kitchen with laundry facilities, lounge, bathroom and two toilets. There are also two staff offices and a rear garden. Care provided by the home has an emphasis on supporting young people to develop skills for independent living.

Summary

This was an unannounced, full inspection and all key standards were considered. At the time of the inspection there was one young person placed in the home who was present during part of the inspection but did not wish to directly participate. Young people are receiving satisfactory care in this home. They are well safeguarded and their health care and educational needs are well met. Young people are consulted and provided with good individual support, especially from key workers. Support is given to young people in preparing for independence and equality and diversity needs are satisfactorily met. Young people prepare their own meals but their diet is not always sufficiently wholesome, nutritional or varied. The home appears to be satisfactorily managed, though management arrangements are potentially confusing. Staff working in the home are competent and staffing levels are satisfactory. Staff have National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) but some additional training is required. Records are well maintained. The building is generally well maintained but young people's bedrooms need attention.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The only action set at the last inspection has been met. Signed consents to young people receiving emergency medical treatment are now retained on file.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people do their own food shopping and prepare their own meals, with some advice and support from staff. Staff have shown some young people how to prepare meals from their country of origin. A record is maintained of meals eaten by young people. Placing authority care plans include the need for young people to learn to shop for food and cook meals, in preparation for independence. However, young people are preparing mainly convenience foods and are not having sufficiently wholesome, nutritious or varied meals. Meals are not in line with the home's weekly menu or with the undertaking about Sunday roast dinners in the Young People's Guide. The home does not have facilities for young people and staff to sit down and eat together and this could not easily be provided. Staff have not recently undertaken training in food hygiene.

Young people receive satisfactory health care. The home has written information about young people's health care needs, together with signed consents to emergency medical treatment. Health care is included in placing authorities' care plans for young people and in the home's own placement plans. Health care given is reviewed as part of young people's statutory reviews

and further plans made. Staff try to encourage young people to attend the necessary health care appointments, with varying success. The home has done well at ensuring that young people receive the necessary immunisations. There are clear rules about smoking and the use of alcohol and drugs. Staff encourage young people to have healthy lifestyles.

There is safe storage for medication and written guidance for its administration by staff. A record is maintained of medication prescribed for young people although there has recently been very little. Staff are confident that young people who administer their own medication which has been given directly to them by their doctors, are sufficiently competent to do so. However, this assessment is not recorded. Young people who self-medicate sign an undertaking that they will take their medication at the prescribed intervals and will store it securely. Where staff monitoring of young people's self-administration is recommended, subsequent monitoring is not evidenced. Young people have lockable boxes in which to keep medication. Household remedies are not kept in the home. First aid boxes are accessible but not all staff have up-to-date training in first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected. Bedrooms are locked when young people go out and young people have keys to their rooms. All bathrooms and toilets have working locks. Young people can make telephone calls in private as they are provided with mobile phones and a weekly allowance for calls. The office phone can also be used. There is a written policy on room searches which is made known to young people and room searches rarely take place. However, staff also routinely check young people's rooms when unoccupied for health and safety reasons. Though young people are made aware of this practice, information is not currently included in the home's written guide for young people. Young people objected to staff going into their rooms when unoccupied at a recent residents' meeting.

Young people are provided with information about how to complain but this does not include clear guidance for contacting an advocate. Young people appear to be able to make their views known to staff in the home and can contact the manager or his deputy when they wish. A written procedure for dealing with complaints is in place and no formal complaints have been recorded over the past year.

Young people appear to be well safeguarded in this home and there have been no recent allegations. Staff endeavour to remain aware of young people's whereabouts and movements and appreciate the importance of child protection and safe caring. Staff also try to support young people in taking care of themselves. Company child protection policy and procedure is in place and a copy of the London procedures is accessible in the home. There have been few accidents and incidents and these are properly recorded and dealt with. Staff have not undertaken recent training in safeguarding. However, the provider is committed to providing this. Also, most staff who work in the home have obtained NVQ and this includes safeguarding.

There is no evidence that young people are bullied in this home. It is made clear in the young people's guide that bullying is not acceptable. Staff are aware of interactions between young people and alerted to the different forms bullying can take. Any incidents which could lead to bullying are promptly dealt with.

Young people who go missing or are late returning to the home are protected in line with the Pan-London procedures. Staff try to make contact with young people who have not returned home and missing young people are promptly reported to the police, parents and placing authorities. Staff also endeavour to establish the whereabouts of missing young people by contacting their families and friends. Staff maintain the necessary records about missing young people, including a description of how the young person is on return to the home and any comments made about where they have been.

Staff appear to be responding effectively to young people's behaviour and do well at de-escalating situations. Consequently, there have been few incidents and very little police involvement. Placing social workers are pleased that young people's behaviour has been less challenging than in previous placements and that their placements in the home have therefore lasted. Staff are beginning to operate a system for rewarding young people's good behaviour and attainment of goals but this is not yet sufficiently refined. Young people are made aware of the home's rules and sanctions. Only acceptable sanctions are used and these are properly recorded. The home has a policy of 'no restraint' and restraint has not been used. Staff have not yet been provided with training in responding to young people's behaviour.

Young people are safeguarded by comprehensive risk assessments of the building and its grounds, and training in health and safety has been provided for senior staff. The home appears to be safe and properly maintained. Fire safety equipment is regularly checked by staff and the contractor and regular fire drills held. However, not all staff have had recent training in fire safety. Safety inspections of the electrical installations and gas and electrical equipment are carried out regularly. The kitchen appears to be clean and young people are supported in learning how to maintain this. Temperatures of fridge/freezers located in young people's bedrooms and where their food is stored, are not regularly checked, as staff are concerned that this would be an additional invasion of young people's privacy.

The company has a sound procedure for the recruitment of staff. Any necessary improvements have already been made or are in-hand. Staff Criminal Record Bureau checks are regularly updated and evidence of satisfactory checks on agency staff is now obtained. Visitors to the home are carefully monitored.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff and good communication. Young people meet regularly with key workers who work individually with young people on different aspects of their lives. Placing social workers are pleased with the work undertaken with young people as a result of the relationships established. Staffing is diverse and reflects the racial and cultural backgrounds of young people. Staff give good support to young people in learning about their countries of origin, particularly where this is shared by staff. Information is provided together with help over cooking meals from the shared country of origin. Good support is also given to young people in following their chosen religions and through changes in religion. Staff help young people to get information and observe dietary requirements. The home's guide for young people includes a commitment to supporting young people in practising their religions, observing culturally significant days and festivals and a commitment to equalities.

Good support is given to young people in their education. Staff try to help young people find the right education or training setting beyond the official school leaving age and placing social

workers comment that staff 'do all they can'. Key workers address this area of young people's lives in their individual work and endeavour to motivate young people. The home has written information about young people's educational histories and needs and all education contacts are recorded. Adequate facilities for home study are provided. Although young people are able to use the computer with internet access in the manager's office, a more accessible computer for the sole use of young people is not currently provided by the home. However, placing authorities have been providing young people with their own computers or are planning to do so shortly.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people appear to be appropriately placed in this home. Detailed care plans from placing authorities are in place. Young people also have placement plans drawn up by staff based on placing authority care plans. Staff are working with young people in line with these plans and in close partnership with placing authorities.

Young people benefit from regular statutory reviews of their needs, welfare and progress provided by placing authorities. Staff from the home attend these reviews and provide reports. Young people are strongly encouraged to attend by staff. Copies of recent review reports are retained on currently placed young people's files in order to inform staff, but this has not always been the case. Young people's needs and progress are also reviewed at staff meetings as part of staff supervision and in monthly reports prepared by key workers for placing authorities.

Young people are supported in maintaining contact with family and friends. The older young people placed in this home often choose to manage their own family contact. However, they benefit from the opportunity provided by staff to share feelings aroused by contact visits. Staff understand the importance of family contact to young people and do well at keeping parents informed about their children's welfare, where appropriate. Young people's friends come to the home and young people prepare food for them.

Staff endeavour to make young people feel welcome when first placed in the home and provide them with information about how the home operates. The home accepts both planned and emergency admissions and planning meetings are said to be held shortly after placement. As previously mentioned, the home does well at sustaining placements so that young people move on into the right semi-independent placements when ready and as planned. Young people can take their bedroom furniture and bedding with them if they wish. Some young people retain contact and visit the home after they have left, although the frequency of this has to be limited in some circumstances.

Young people's views are regularly sought by staff and particularly in individual key work sessions. Young people are also invited to give their views at residents' meetings where they set the agenda but do not always want to participate fully. Young people have telephone access to the Registered Manager and his deputy when they are not present in the home and use this, when necessary, to make their views known at this more senior level. Young people's views are also sought by placing social workers in their visits to the home and as part of statutory reviews.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

This home caters for the older age group and preparation for independence is therefore a key part of its remit. There is a comprehensive programme for preparation for independence which young people follow with their key workers. Young people are expected to do their own shopping, cooking, laundry and to clean and tidy their own bedrooms, in line with both placing authority care plans and the home's placement plans. Support over the programme is given to young people in individual key work sessions, both through discussion and practical assistance. Young people vary in the extent to which they engage with the programme. However, some young people have successfully acquired the skills to make a smooth transition into semi-independent living.

Young people benefit from living in a residential street and in a house which is not marked out in any way as being a children's home. The building is of adequate size for the number of young people, except that there is no space for a dining table and chairs, as mentioned under a previous standard. There is a comfortable lounge, small kitchen and sufficient bathrooms and toilets. Communal areas are suitably decorated, carpeted & furnished. Young people's bedrooms are all of adequate size but they are not all well decorated and some furniture is in poor condition. Rooms are not always refurbished as necessary between placements and are consequently not sufficiently homely or welcoming for newly placed young people. The home is generally clean and repairs are normally carried out reasonably promptly. Improvements have recently been made to the rear garden which is now paved over but brightened by flowers.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home's Statement of Purpose is comprehensive and has been recently reviewed. The Young People's Guide is well presented and endeavours to inform young people about the services they can expect from the home. However, the guide contains some inaccuracies and gaps, some of which have been referred to under previous standards.

Current staffing levels of one residential social worker on duty at a time, during the day and at night, appears to be sufficient to meet the needs of young people currently placed. This is supplemented by the manager, deputy manager and additional bank staff attending meetings, undertaking shopping and other activities with and on behalf of young people. The permanent staff group is not currently complete so a significant proportion of shifts are being covered by bank and agency staff. Although these temporary staff are familiar with the home, consistency of care for young people is nevertheless compromised to some extent. However, additional permanent staff have now been recruited to work in the home. Staff appear to be competent and the company has done well in ensuring that staff obtain NVQ qualifications. There is overlap between all shifts for exchange of information about young people's welfare and this helps to promote continuity of care.

Ongoing training is provided for staff by the company and staff also have access to local authority training courses. The company maintains comprehensive training records for staff, so gaps in training can be easily identified. Most staff have not been provided with additional safeguarding training beyond that included in their NVQ courses. Training in behaviour management has also not been provided and staff do not have up-to-date training in food hygiene. Some staff have not undertaken sufficiently recent training in fire safety and first aid and it is important that all staff are trained as they are normally on duty alone. The company does, however, demonstrate a commitment to providing staff with the necessary training.

Young people benefit from living in a home which appears to be satisfactorily managed. The day-to-day management of the home is undertaken by the deputy manager, who is frequently present in the home, monitors records, undertakes the supervision of staff and is accessible to both staff and young people. The deputy manager is knowledgeable and committed. He has NVQ qualifications and is currently studying for the Registered Manager's Award. The home's Registered Manager is also able and qualified and has additional, more senior management responsibilities within the company. The Registered Manager is consequently in much less frequent contact with the home. The home's management situation could, therefore, potentially be confusing for young people, parents, staff and placing social workers and it is not always clear where responsibility lies. The current situation also means that the Registered Manager is not responsible for the day-to-day management of the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. This is discussed in the body of the report, under the specific outcome areas. For example, young people are supported in preparing meals from their countries of origin and in observing the dietary requirements of their chosen religions. Individualised support is given to young people in their health care and education. A diverse staff group reflects the backgrounds of young people placed and staff are able to respond to young people's identity needs. Good support is given to some young people in learning about their countries of origin by staff who share their cultural backgrounds. Young people are also supported in practising their religions.

Comprehensive and well organised case files are maintained for each young person. Staff do well at ensuring that written information about young people is provided by placing authorities. Case files include all the necessary information and are securely stored. Young people are informed in writing that they can see their files if they wish to.

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
10	arrange for young people to be provided with food which is properly prepared, wholesome, nutritious and sufficiently varied (Regulation 13(1))	1 October 2009
26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health or safety of young people accommodated in the home are identified and, as far as possible, eliminated by monitoring the temperatures of refrigerators and freezers used to store young people's food (Regulation 23 (c))	1 October 2009
24	ensure that all parts of the home used by young people are reasonably decorated and suitably furnished, including young people's bedrooms (Regulation 31(2))	30 October 2009
31	provide staff with appropriate training (Regulation 27(4))	31 December 2009

32	ensure that the person appointed as manager and registered with Ofsted, is responsible for the management of the home (Regulation 7).	31 December 2009
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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):

- arrange for appropriate action to be taken to secure the dental services needed by rearranging appointments for young people (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that young people who keep and administer their own medication are assessed by staff as sufficiently responsible by staff to do so and that this is recorded (NMS 13.9)
- review written guidance for staff on searching young people's bedrooms and ensure that this is in line with the relevant standard and the information given to young people. (NMS 9.8)
- ensure that the home's Young People's Guide includes an accurate summary of what the home sets out to do for young people and includes information about how young people can secure access to an independent advocate (NMS 1.3).