

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Seka Graovac
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	9 October 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

The provider is a registered childcare charity and housing association. Its motto is being passionate about positive outcomes. The home offers periods of planned care to children and young people from 12 to 16 years old. The placements last between three and 18 months, depending on individual needs. The home also caters for emergency admissions for children and young people from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. It aims to create a caring, structured and stimulating environment that is responsive to the individual needs of children and young people. The home focuses on meeting the individual needs of young people within a positive group living experience.

This is an inner city service. It is situated close to many recreational and leisure facilities, local youth clubs, libraries and various places of worship, all within a community of diverse cultures.

There were four young people living in the home at the time of the inspection. The inspector met and spoke in private with three of them. Their views contributed to the inspection. The fourth person remained out of the building during the inspection.

Summary

This inspection was unannounced. Its main aim was to assess the quality of the service in line with the full range of National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes. The main inspection finding is that the service meets and in many ways exceeds the National Minimum Standards for Children's Homes.

A committed, qualified and competent staff team led by a highly effective management ensures that young people consistently receive a service of the highest quality. Through extensive partnership working and excellent communication supported by robust recordkeeping, the home effectively promotes positive outcomes for young people. Young people live in an environment that is consistently supportive, stable and safe. Their individuality, educational and creative achievements are effectively promoted and celebrated. They are empowered to effectively engage in the decision making processes. This has a positive impact on their confidence, feelings of self-worth, aspirations and willingness to engage. The home's music project adds extra value to this outstanding service. The monitoring of the quality of the service is excellent. With the steadfast focus on creating the best conditions for young people's development, the home uses monitoring proactively to secure continuous improvement.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection that was carried out in October 2008, one action was raised. It related to the written procedures for safeguarding children that used the outdated terminology. The home has fully addressed the identified weakness by updating the procedures and strengthening the safeguarding processes.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home has various systems in place to effectively promote young people's health. Significant resources, such as a designated staff member and a health co-ordinator on the level of the organisation are dedicated to take a lead responsibility for this task. Health promotion material is shared with young people and there are regular training opportunities for staff. All permanent staff are first-aiders and know how to protect young people in emergencies.

The home's links with social and health services in the area are excellent. Young people benefit from these links that include a close partnership working with the Multi Agencies Liaison Team. Various health professionals visit on a regular basis to provide support and information to staff and young people. This includes looked after children nurses, specialists in the field of substance misuse and therapists from a clinic that is world renown for its effectiveness in helping children.

Good partnership working and communication are facilitated by excellent systems for record keeping. Appropriate arrangements for young people to receive prescribed or over the counter medication when they need it are consistently followed. Related records enable easy monitoring and confirm that young people receive their medication when they need it. Each young person has a comprehensive in-house individual health plan that has been agreed with them. Those plans identify clear actions for improving the young people's understanding of how they themselves can promote various aspects of their wellbeing. These actions are implemented and the health plans are effective. The impact of the young person's health needs, including any allergies, on their nutritional requirements is recorded in this document. Any other food related requirements, including the young person's religious, cultural and personal preferences are also recorded. Staff members encourage young people to have a healthy and balanced diet while offering them a great variety of nutritious food to choose from.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are protected by the robust procedure for recruiting and vetting staff members. The other procedures and policies which impact on safeguarding, such as dealing with child protection concerns, bullying, complaints, being absent without authority and managing difficult behaviour provide clear guidance to staff on how to consistently implement good practices. Young people are protected by staff training, competences and caring attitudes. Comprehensive records kept on young people's files, as well as on the home's central logs of significant events facilitate good sharing of information, monitoring and improvement. Young people's files include detailed written individual behaviour management strategies and reward contracts. This is to motivate them to improve the identified behaviours. Young people enjoy privacy and have access to their files.

The home has excellent links with the placing authority and other agencies involved in protecting young people, such as the Local Safeguarding Children's Board, the police force and the specialist team for Children Abused Through Sexual Exploitation. Ofsted knows about and monitors significant events through the home's appropriate arrangements for reporting those events. Good record keeping, communication and partnership working are effective in ensuring that young people live in an environment that is safe.

Promotion of physical security, health and safety is achieved through a wide range of appropriate arrangements and checks. This includes young people's participation in monthly fire-drills.

Emotional safety is facilitated by the home's ethos of emphasising young people's rights and the importance of having trusting relationships with adults. This is successfully translated into good staff working practices. For example, young people are encouraged to use a formal procedure to confidently expect and demand a certain standard of service. Young person's concerns or any form of bullying are robustly dealt with. A staff member has a designated role in promoting an atmosphere that is free from bullying and providing mediation services when it is needed. Issues affecting young people's feelings and behaviour are regularly discussed with them at the weekly key-working sessions and house meetings. Young people feel safe in the home that effectively protects their welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff members effectively support young people to develop their individuality in line with their placement plans, choices and aspirations. The home is very effective in supporting young people to gain achievements and enjoy life. Young people benefit from engaging in formal education and structured learning. Their education is supported by the home's close partnership working with the education authority and excellent record keeping. The home has effectively facilitated a positive shift in young people's attitudes towards education and learning. Young people now actively support each other to attend their schools. For example, the last quarterly education attendance monitoring report shows 96% attendance. This is significantly better than how it was before.

Individual weekly activities plans show that young people enjoy a good balance of structured and free time. They are given opportunities to enjoy the in-house and external activities of their choice. The home has recently organised a successful music project. With facilitation by a professional musician, young people were enabled to produce three music pieces. These tracks are posted on the organisation's website to celebrate the young people's creative success and uniqueness. This has had a positive impact on their confidence and feelings of self-worth.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home effectively empowers young people to contribute to the decision making process. It works in partnership with the placing authority to ensure that young people's views are consistently sought throughout their engagement with the care system and the home. This means that young people play an active part in the placement and review decisions. They are appropriately supported during the placement, as well as when the time is right for them to leave. Staff members have in-depth knowledge of the assessment process that focuses on young people's needs and views. Individual young people's files contain very comprehensive information relating to the home's initial assessment, on-going monitoring of their progress and the reports of their statutory reviews.

Young people benefit from building trusting relationships with staff members. This is facilitated by an effective key working system that includes weekly individual sessions with young people. In addition to young people's contribution being valued in the home, they are also given opportunities to impact on the service on the level of the organisation. This is achieved through the Service Users' Participation Group that provides a wider forum for consultation with young people. The group is proactive in communicating with other young people through the net and

the newsletter. It also met with politicians, giving young people an opportunity to influence the quality of children's residential care provision in England.

Some young people have benefited from the advocacy services that successfully defended their rights in the court proceedings.

Young people's files contain clear information relating to the contact arrangements agreed with the placing authority. Young people receive appropriate support to maintain and develop constructive family and other relationships.

As the home focuses on meeting the individual needs of young people within a positive group living experience, it facilitates friendships through joint engagements and regular house meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live in an environment that is well maintained. The home is comfortably furnished. It is kept clean and tidy. It appropriately addresses young people's needs and contributes to their economic wellbeing. Each young person has their own bedroom with the adjacent washing and toileting facilities. Communal areas are spacious and include a sitting room, recreational/education room, kitchen/dining area, laundry room and a large garden at the back of the house. The home facilitates communal living well, while at the same time young people's private space is respected.

Staff members work closely with the placing authority to prepare young people for successful transition from this setting.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's comprehensive documents, such as the Statement of Purpose and the Young Person's Booklet accurately describe the service offered. These documents are used proactively to aid good communication with different stakeholders and serve as the benchmarking tool. Young people and others involved in their care know what to expect. They receive clear information about the level and the standard of the service provision. In addition to the organisation's explicit commitment to positive outcomes for young people, there is clear information on how this is to be realised in practice.

The home effectively provides good conditions for young people to grow in confidence and self-esteem. This increases their chances for fulfilling their potentials. Young people live in an environment that is consistently supportive, stable and safe. This inspires young people's trust in themselves and adults, increasing their motivation to positively engage.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff members consistently follow clear policies and procedures that emphasise the importance of individually tailored support. This includes secure and confidential keeping of the comprehensive records that have been agreed with young people, as well as the home's commitment towards the unconditional respect of young people's feelings, identity and heritage. This protects young people's uniqueness and ensures the implementation of anti-discriminatory practices. The home actively encourages

understanding and celebration of diversity through facilitated learning about and appreciation of different cultures, traditions, practices and believes.

Good staff practices are underpinned by a good range of staff training opportunities and by clear arrangements for staff supervision, performance appraisal and staff meetings. A committed, qualified and competent staff team led by a highly effective management ensures that young people consistently receive a service of the highest standard. Excellent record keeping facilitates good communication and partnership working, as well as the effective monitoring of the quality of the service. In addition to the excellent internal monitoring practices, the organisation keeps a keen interest in the young people's welfare and the conduct of the home. The monthly monitoring reports always include young people's views and focus on different outcomes as described in the Every Child matters document. The home meets regularly with the placing authority to discuss quarterly statistical information and review the quality of the provision. These monitoring processes are used to drive improvement of the service.

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):