

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18 August 2010
Inspector	Jackie Graves
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	30 November 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 children's home is privately owned. It is a family business with the majority of family members employed within it. The home is registered to provide care and accommodation for up to four children and young people of either gender, between the ages of 11 and 17.

The home is a two storey house. There is a bathroom, toilet and staff office on the first floor along with children's bedrooms. On the ground floor there is a kitchen, a dining room and a lounge which is also used as a staff sleeping-in room. There is a small garden, with a patio and laundry room at the rear of the property. There is easy access to local transport, shopping, leisure and education facilities.

At the time of the inspection, three young people were placed in the home, one of whom was missing from care at the time of this visit. Two young people were present and participated in the inspection.

Summary

This unannounced full inspection looked at all the key standards plus those standards relating to pocket money and leisure activities. The inspection also assessed the progress the home has made in meeting the five actions and seven recommendations made at the last inspection.

The home continues to provide a satisfactory service overall. Considerable improvements to the appearance of communal areas of the building result in a good outcome for economic wellbeing. Bullying is not an issue in the home and young people's privacy is respected. Appropriate procedures are in place should young people go missing from the home.

Arrangements for health and medication are sound. There is a consistent staff team but there are gaps in staff training, staffing levels and checks on staff recruitment. The home's policy for safeguarding does not cover all required elements.

As a result of this inspection, five actions and eight recommendations are made. These are in relation to documentation, monitoring the service, staff training and staffing levels, activities, contact and risk assessment.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the home was asked to ensure that vital information was available on children's files. This is now in place so staff have full information available about the young people they care for.

The registered provider was asked to make some improvements to the appearance and maintenance of the building. Redecoration has taken place and new furnishings supplied. This improves the appearance of the house, makes it clean and homely and ensures young people have somewhere safe to lock their valuables. Fire doors are now kept closed to help promote fire safety in the building.

The provider has reviewed the language used in the children's guide to make this simpler for young people to read.

The provider ensures that full employment histories are taken of new staff employed at the home. They also check any gaps in employment and ask staff to account for these. This ensures the home gets a full account of applicants' previous working lives.

Consents for medical treatment and first aid are now obtained from those with responsibility for young people which clarifies the medical legality of any intervention required. .

The provider was asked to make some improvements to the provision of meals. Menus are now kept and the range of foods available has improved, with more foods to meet young people's cultural needs. Meals are still mostly eaten individually, so the recommendation to ensure meals are set-up to be well-managed, social occasions is not yet met.

The registered provider was asked to encourage young people to sign records of their allowances. Although staff have asked young people to do this, they have not signed these records.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The home promotes young people's health. Health needs are clearly recorded on young people's care plans, with appointments made for any general and specialist health services young people require. Staff encourage young people to attend these appointments and to take responsibility for any detrimental effects on their health should they refuse to engage with health services. Some information on health is available in the home, for example on drug and alcohol misuse, for young people to refer to.

There are sound arrangements for storing and administering medicines. The home carries out risk assessments which judge a young person's capacity to safely self administer their medication. Consents for medical treatment and first aid are obtained from those with responsibility for young people. Although the majority of staff are trained to administer first aid there is not always a qualified person on each shift.

The menu has improved to include more foods which the young people enjoy and which are culturally relevant to them. Young people can help themselves to snacks and drinks and may prepare meals with staff assistance. Meals are not always social occasions, with meals often eaten in isolation.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff are trained in protecting young people but are not sufficiently guided by the home's child protection policy. Young people have access to the home's complaint's policy. In effect, young people are more likely to raise minor concerns which staff promptly deal with. The home now plans to record such concerns to evidence how these are dealt with.

Although bullying is not currently an issue in the home, staff are clear how to respond and protect young people should it arise. Sources of help are available so that young people can seek suitable guidance about bullying. There is a satisfactory system to report young people who are absent without authority to try to secure their safe return to the home.

Young people live in a home which provides physical safety and security. Staff ensure regular testing of alarms, systems and installations are carried out to keep the building safe. Although the home carries out fire drills, these are insufficient to ensure each young person knows the emergency evacuation procedure for the home.

Checks on prospective new staff include vetting employment history and taking up references. However, checks with the Criminal Records Bureau are not always obtained before people start work in the home which is a potential risk to young people.

Staff work with young people to help them manage their behaviour. They talk to young people about the consequences of their actions, apply appropriate sanctions and use rewards. Although restraint is not used as a means of control and there is no evidence that staff are trained in restraint, the home's Statement of Purpose gives conflicting information.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive support and guidance according to their individual needs. All young people are allocated a key worker to provide individualised support but can approach any member of the staff for support or advice. Therapeutic techniques are not used in the home but the staff ensure young people can access the services they need through consultation with their placing authority, for example, counselling services.

Staff encourage young people to participate in education. To do this they escort young people to school or reward their attendance so they might achieve and do well. Facilities are provided within the home which are conducive to study and homework including a desk and computer access.

Improved leisure facilities within the home mean that young people have access to newspapers, some magazines and books. The home organises an annual holiday and occasional leisure activities for young people with staff. However, staffing levels, staff availability and lack of funding prevents young people participating as fully in leisure activities as they may wish.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Regularly reviewed plans are in place which take into consideration young people's views. This ensures staff have current information about the young people they care for. The home supports young people to maintain contact with those family and friends who are important to them, as agreed on their care plans. However, contact with friends is not facilitated on the premises. This does not afford children opportunities available to most in the community.

The home has procedures, including verbal and written information, for introducing young people to the home so that they know what to expect when living there. Young people are sometimes placed in an emergency, in line with the home's Statement of Purpose, and may not have the opportunity to visit the home prior to moving in. The needs of the young person moving in and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents are not always assessed. This can have adverse effects on the atmosphere in the home.

Young people are encouraged to make decisions about their lives. They can make a positive contribution as to how the home runs on a day-to-day basis, for example, giving their views on menus, decoration and holiday plans.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from having their own bedrooms which have sufficient furniture, including lockable storage for valuables. They are encouraged to decorate their bedrooms with soft furnishings and posters, to make their rooms personal to them.

Considerable improvements to communal areas of the building have been made, including redecoration and supplying new furnishings and carpet. This has created a more homely and welcoming environment which young people are pleased with. There are plans to improve the external appearance of the home later in the year.

There is a policy which makes clear the allowances and pocket money which are available to young people. However, this does not make clear what happens to allowances when they are withheld as a sanction. Young people do not always sign financial records to indicate they have received their pocket money and allowances.

Young people receive support to help them when they move on from the home into independent or semi-independent living. Staff contribute to planning for young people's future lives. They support young people to develop useful skills and knowledge for when they leave care.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Management has produced written information on the service but this contains some inaccuracies and has not been formally approved by the provider. The language used in the children's guide is now simpler for young people to read and understand. However, the information is not provided in a suitable format, nor designed to be appealing to young people. Limitations in the self-evaluation of the home against its Statement of Purpose inhibit the ability to identify any shortfalls and put them right in-house.

The staff team consists of family members supported by bank staff, rather than agency staff, so that young people are looked after by people who know them. Although there are usually two staff working in the home, at times there is only one member of staff on shift. The home has not assessed any risks associated with this. Staffing levels can impact on the time staff have available to interact with all young people to ensure they feel nurtured; it can also impact on the time staff have available to accompany young people on activities outside of the home.

The staff team brings varied experience to their care of young people. Although they have a wide range of qualifications, these are not all relevant to caring for young people. Some training is provided, for example, in child protection. Insufficient staff are trained in first aid to ensure that there is someone qualified on each shift to deal with emergencies. Staff hand over sessions take place so that staff coming on shift are fully informed of what has been happening in the home.

Individual case files are kept for each young person which contain most of the necessary information. Where placing authorities have not supplied information, staff have requested this. Staff are clear about retaining the confidentiality of this information and who may access the files.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The staff team mostly reflects the backgrounds of the residents and has staff of both genders. Menus include foods to meet the cultural needs of young people. Religious and individual needs are assessed and defined in young people's care plans so staff can ensure these are met. The provision of some books and newspapers which are culturally relevant has helped to positively promote diversity.

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
1	update the Statement of Purpose and children's guide to ensure both documents contain all required information, that the children's guide is in an appropriate format and that the registered person formally approves the Statement of Purpose (Regulations 4,5)	30 September 2010
4	ensure that suitable facilities are provided within the children's home for any child accommodated there to meet privately at any reasonable time with their friends (Regulation 15 1 b)	30 September 2010
27	ensure an appropriate check with the Criminal Records Bureau is conducted before a person starts work in the home (Regulation 26, Schedule 2)	3 September 2010
29	make sure staff have the qualifications for the work they are to perform, in this instance relating to training in first aid and restraint (Regulation (26) (3) (b))	30 October 2010
32	ensure the person carrying out monitoring visits interviews, with their consent and in private, such of the children accommodated there, their parents, relatives and persons working at the home as appears necessary in order to form an opinion of the standard of care provided in the home. (Regulation 33 (4) (a))	3 September 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure meals are set up to be well-managed, social occasions (NMS 10)

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- ensure that the child protection policy and procedures complies fully with the standard (NMS 17)
 - review levels of staffing and funding to ensure these are sufficient to provide young people with a range of activities (NMS 15)
 - make sure both the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of residents, are taken into account, and recorded, in decisions on admission (NMS 5.8)
 - encourage young people to sign records of their allowances and make clear in the policy on allowances what happens to allowances when they are withheld as a sanction (NMS 11)
 - carry out a risk assessment which is recorded in writing when only one person is on duty at any time which examines any likely risks to children, staff and members of the public, and this has demonstrated that there is no unacceptable level of risk from such an arrangement (NMS 30.5)
 - ensure a minimum of 80% of care staff have completed their Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People National Vocational Qualification (NMS 29.5)
 - consider the effectiveness of monitoring visits carried out by a person directly concerned with the conduct of the home. (NMS 32)