

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Date of last inspection	18 February 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

Kestral House is owned by My Choice Children's Homes Ltd. It is a large detached town house in a residential area. There is a garden to the rear of the house, and communal areas such as a dining room, kitchen and lounge on the ground floor as well as a staff office.

Staff sleeping in accommodation and the young people's rooms are situated on the first and second floors. The home caters for young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties from the age of 10 to under 18 years.

Summary

At this unannounced inspection all the key standards were assessed. The home provides an excellent standard of care to the young people. It is clear that the staff team values and promotes the input of the young people into the running of the home and that opportunities for them to voice their feelings about their care are readily available.

The level of monitoring provided by the manager and senior external managers ensures that the standard of care is constantly appraised. The staff team works well together and good communication ensures that practice is consistent and evaluated.

One recommendation was made as a result of this inspection.

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 last inspection a recommendation was made with regards to ensuring that 80% of the staff team achieve National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The home has a rolling program of training for the NVQ qualification, however, the ratio of achieving 80% to have completed it has yet to be achieved. This recommendation continues.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged to pursue healthy lifestyles that include eating balanced diets. They are involved in menu planning and are made aware of the importance of eating healthily. Opportunities are provided for young people to develop their culinary skills as part of the program to develop their independence and self-care skills. The young people spoke in positive terms about both the quantity and quality of food on offer.

Health needs of the young people are very well met. Appointments with health professionals are arranged and specialist input is gained to ensure that the young people's emotional and physical health is promoted. All young people have written consent from their parent or guardian with regards to the administration of medication or first aid.

The home has a rigorous system for ensuring that the administration of medication is closely monitored and regularly audited.

The health of the young people both physically and emotionally is valued and promoted to an excellent standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy is respected by the staff team and sensitive information is stored securely. The young people are made aware of their right to see information kept on them. They are also made aware of the circumstances in which room searches may occur. A record is made should this happen. Telephone calls to social workers, family and friends can be made in private. Additionally, the young people are able to receive credit on their mobile telephones.

The right of a young person to complain about their care in the home is made clear to them on their admission to the home. The young person's handbook gives clear guidance to the young people about who they can complain to and their contact details. Young people confirm that they are confident to voice their opinions about any issues and that they have the opportunity to do this at house meetings, key work sessions and on an informal basis to the staff working on shift or to the manager. Complaints and their resolution are recorded.

All members of staff receive child protection training as part of their induction process, plus regular 'refresher' training to ensure that they are up-to-date with child protection procedures. Additionally they have access to local safeguarding procedures and the organisation's child protection policy. All members of staff are clear as to their obligations in the event that they have concerns about a young person's wellbeing. Detailed records are maintained on any child protection concerns and how they have been pursued and resolved. Oversight and monitoring provided by experienced senior managers ensures that any potential child protection issues are addressed and resolved swiftly.

Bullying is not tolerated in the home and the young people are aware of this. The staff encourage the young people to resolve any issues by meeting and discussing with staff support. The staff team are very aware of group dynamics and relationships and strive to de-escalate tension and disputes.

The home has a well established policy and procedure for reporting young people who are absent without authority. Each young person has it clearly recorded in their care plan as to what course of action will be pursued should they leave the home without permission or not return to the home at the agreed time. This strategy is also explained to the young people so that they understand what the consequences will be if they go missing. The staff liaise with the police especially when there are young people who may persistently abscond or who are at risk if they are missing.

Each young person has a behaviour management plan which outlines what strategies help them to retain control of their behaviour and what triggers may cause distress and challenging behaviour. The young people are rewarded for good behaviour and rewards are worked out on an individual basis between each young person's key worker and the young people themselves.

Where sanctions are imposed they are clearly recorded and endorsed by both the manager and the external manager who carries out monitoring visits to the home.

If an incident arises whereby physical restraint is used, a record is kept and this is checked by the manager and external monitoring manager, to ensure that the use of physical intervention was appropriate. All members of staff are trained in the method of restraint used in the home.

Risk assessments are made with regards to the premises and activities in which the young people partake. They are regularly reviewed and updated. Additionally, individual risk assessments are completed on the young people with regards to their behaviour and potential vulnerability in certain situations, such as going missing, bullying, alcohol abuse and potential for offending behaviour.

Regular checks of the premises and safety equipment, such as fire alarms, are carried out. External professionals also underpin these checks with their own checks and tests. Fire drills also occur on a regular basis.

The homes comprehensive recruitment process requires all prospective staff to undertake a Criminal Records Bureau check, provide references and undertake an interview. Additionally the young people are part of the recruitment process and provide feedback to recruiting managers after they have met prospective candidates.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staffing levels ensure young people receive a high degree of individual support. Staff seek out professional assistance to address specific areas of concern. All staff are conversant with the specific physical, social and emotional needs of each individual. The religious and cultural needs of each individual are identified as part of the admission process and arrangements made to ensure they can be effectively met. The young people were observed to interact freely with staff and appeared at ease in their surroundings. Young people talked in positive terms about their relationships with staff.

Each young person in the home has a Personal Education Plan (PEP). These are up-to-date and include strategies and plans to help the young people develop their education and life skills. Staff provide excellent levels of support to the young people to enable them to attend their educational settings. It is clear that education is highly valued by the staff team and a lot of effort is made to assist the young people in experiencing education as a positive part of their lives.

The young people have the opportunity to take part in a range of activities both in and out of the home. Preferences for activities are ascertained during key work sessions and during house meetings. Activities include trips to the cinema, adventure parks, swimming, cycling, trampolining and fishing. Young people are also able to go out with friends from the local community. They also go on holidays away from the home supported by members of staff.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person has a placement plan that identifies their specific care need and provides guidance for staff on how they can best be met during their placement. Young people are actively encouraged to work alongside staff to develop their plans. All plans are subject to regular review, in line with looked after children guidance and updated in line with changing

circumstances. Reviews are often facilitated within the home and are attended by all interested parties including the young person, family members and their social worker. Staff always prepare a written report on the young persons progress prior to their review.

Contact arrangements between young people and their families are clearly identified in their care plans. Any restrictions on contact are known. Staff will often assist young people with transport for contact visits. Young people maintain regular contact with their social workers. Written records are maintained of any contacts and the staff collate this information and share it with others such as placing officers and social workers, especially if the contact affects the young person in any way. The young people have access to telephones which they can use in private and they also have their own mobile telephones.

The home has a written admission procedure that aims to help each young person settle in effectively. All prospective residents are encouraged to visit the home prior to admission. Young people are provided with a young person's guide on admission. There is an expectation that leaving the home will be a planned process that will start well in advance of any proposed departure date and include joint planning with the aftercare team of the placing authority.

The views of the young people are highly valued and seen as a central element of the function of the home. The young people are encouraged to voice their opinions in formal settings such as house meetings as well as in key sessions and daily interaction with staff. The young people are also able to voice their opinions about prospective members of staff during recruitment.

The interaction between the members of staff and young people is relaxed and warm. Young people feel they are listened to and supported even during times of distress and challenging behaviour. Support given to the young people is delivered sensitively. Staff work hard to maintain behavioural expectations and boundaries whilst ensuring the young people feel listened to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has a policy and process to follow to enable young people to move on from the home and into independent living. Programmes for the young people enable them to develop their independence skills. The staff team are very aware that the process of leaving the home can be very unsettling and they work hard to ensure that this is sensitively planned and commensurate with each young person's ability to cope with the transition.

The young people choose the décor in their rooms and are able to personalise them with posters and pictures. The young people all have their own key for their room. There is separate sleeping in accommodation for the staff. The home has enough space for the young people to meet visitors in private. Areas which can be used for this purpose include the lounge, the dining room, the education room and the young person's bedroom.

Overall, the accommodation and environment is comfortable and well maintained. The manager operates a thorough system whereby any structural defects or repairs are promptly passed on to the maintenance team for their attention.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's Statement of Purpose is up to date and accurately reflects what the home intends to achieve. Additionally the document explains how the home and organisation promotes diversity and values different cultures and beliefs. The young people have a handbook which explains to them what it is like to live in the home, the rules, their rights, responsibilities and to whom they can complain. The Statement of Purpose and young person's handbook are reviewed by the manager on a monthly basis.

The home has a well motivated and experienced group of staff many of whom have worked in other homes operated by the company. There is a culture of training and professional development within the staff team and an expectation that individuals will continually update their knowledge and skills by accessing training opportunities. Members of the staff team have the experience and skills to meet the needs of the young people. Staff are provided with job descriptions that detail their role and responsibilities and there are clear lines of accountability. The home has developed a comprehensive range of policies and procedures that provide clear guidance for staff. Staff are involved in many aspects of the development of the home and contribute to staff meetings.

All members of staff receive regular supervision and appraisals. The training offered to the staff team is varied and regular. New members of staff receive a thorough induction process which enables them to develop their competencies directly in line with requirements needed by National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People. 50% of the staff team have achieved NVQ Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People.

Practice is monitored by external managers who carry out regular visits to assess the standard of care provided. Reports written as a result of these visits are thorough and indicate which areas of the home need improvement. The manager in turn also regularly checks all the areas outlined in Schedule 6, such as restraint and sanctions, medication, accidents and admissions and discharges. The overall monitoring of records carried out by members of staff, the manager and senior external managers is of an excellent standard.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each young person's individual needs are known and met by the staff team. The staff team value and promote differences between any person's background, whether they be a young person or a member of staff. Diversity is seen as an opportunity to learn from each other and to be enjoyed and celebrated. The effectiveness of how the home is addressing issues related to equality and diversity is analysed and monitored as part of visits undertaken by a senior manager.

Each young person has a dedicated record that contains the information required in Schedule 3. Records examined contained recent and relevant information. The young people's records are regularly audited to ensure they are up-to-date and accurate. All the records are kept in appropriately locked facilities.

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
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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):

- ensure that a minimum of 80% of the staff team achieve NVQ Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. (NMS 29).