

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
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Date of last inspection	26/11/2009
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 home is owned by My Choice Children's Homes Ltd. It is a 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 up to three young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties from the age of 10 to under 18 years.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced inspection all the key standards were assessed. Three young people took part in the inspection by meeting with the inspector.

The home continues to offer excellent levels of support and guidance to the young people. Young people's views and opinions about how the home is being run are valued and promoted.

The process to prepare young people for independence is particularly well structured and encourages them to develop their life skills and confidence. The manager and staff team work well together and evaluate their practice to ensure that high standards are maintained.

One action was made during this inspection. This relates to ensuring that reports written as a result of monitoring visits carried out by external managers are made available to the home's Registered Manager.

Two recommendations were made. These relate to ensuring that all risk assessments are completed in writing and asking that the home continues to strive towards ensuring that at least 80% of the staff team have completed the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended that the records of all sanctions imposed include the end date of the sanction. The recording is now detailed and includes the dates that sanctions have finished.

A recommendation was also made asking that the home achieve a ratio of 80% of the staff team who have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in

Caring for Children and Young People. While this ratio has not been achieved, the home continues to offer this training to all members of staff on a rolling basis.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The staff know each young person's dietary needs and preferences. This includes having a detailed knowledge of whether the needs are based on cultural or medical issues. The young people are offered a varied and healthy diet and are involved in menu preparation at the weekly young person's meetings. They are also encouraged to prepare snacks and meals as part of the process of preparation for independence.

The health care needs of the young people are met to an excellent standard. Any necessary health appointments are made and liaison maintained with specialists, such as psychologists, if this is needed. The young people are encouraged to make their own appointments as part of the process of encouraging their independence and self-care skills. Additionally each young person is encouraged to take part in exercise and to make healthy life choices with regards to issues such as smoking and alcohol consumption. Particular emphasis and support is given to the young people in ensuring that their emotional well-being is promoted to an excellent standard.

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

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's right to privacy is respected and acknowledged in the home. All sensitive information is stored securely and the young people are made aware of their right to see information held about them. The young people are also able to make telephone calls in private and members of staff always knock on doors before entering their bedrooms.

Young people are given clear details of how to make a complaint should they wish. Information is further contained in the young person's guide. Young people are aware of how to complain and to whom, they are confident that their complaints will be acknowledged and treated seriously. The young people are offered numerous opportunities with different members of staff to voice their feelings and opinions and this enables complaints to be dealt with at a very low level.

Excellent systems and staff awareness ensures that any incidents relating to safeguarding and child protection are vigorously pursued and all agencies closely liaised with. Regular child protection training and access to local safeguarding procedures, underpinned by clear company policy, ensures that all member of staff know what to do in the event that they have concerns about a young person's

safety. Records of any incidents or concerns are of a high standard and clearly record how the incident has been resolved and who was responsible for pursuing plans of action.

Young people report that bullying is not tolerated in the home and is not a concern for them. The staff team are very aware of group dynamics and relationships and will address issues openly in community meetings as well as in individual sessions.

Each young person has an individual protocol in place which outlines the plan of action should they be away from the home without permission or are missing. The young people are very aware of what steps will be taken in these circumstances and what the consequences are. Records relating to absences without permission are detailed and include comments made by the young person on their return as well as a running log of liaison with professionals and agencies, such as police officers and social workers. The home's approach to managing missing young people is robust and ensures that all professionals are kept up to date about each incident.

Each young person has a detailed behaviour management plan which is regularly reviewed and updated. These plans outline what strategies need to be used to help the young people manage situations which may cause them distress or may result in challenging behaviour. There are a clear set of rules and expectations in the home and the young people are made aware of these when they are admitted. Positive behaviour is rewarded and young people are able to earn extra spending money and outings by keeping to behavioural expectations.

Sanctions are used on occasion. The young people report that these are fair and that they understand when they have been imposed. Records of sanctions are clear and are checked by the manager regularly.

Physical restraint is a rare occurrence in the home. If an incident takes place whereby physical control has had to be used then a detailed record is made of this which is checked and endorsed by the home's manager. All members of staff receive training in the method of restraint used in the home.

Thorough risk assessments are made with regards to the premises and activities in which the young people partake. They are regularly reviewed and updated. The approach to risk management means that young people are able to take part in activities and outings with the support they need. Some measures taken to ensure the safety of the young people have not been the subject of a written risk assessment. For example, disabling the cooker during the night time to reduce the risk of fire in the event that a young person tries to cook unsupervised during the night. Written risk assessments are also not in place explaining the practice of removing the kettle and toaster from the kitchen after 11 pm at night.

The home's 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.

The approach operated in the home ensures that young people safety and well-being is protected and promoted to an excellent standard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person receives a high level of support from the members of staff. Any specific needs for support are identified in each young person's care plan which is regularly reviewed and updated. Key workers meet with each young person on a regular basis so that the young person has an opportunity to discuss their thoughts, feelings and how they think they are being cared for. If an individual is identified as needing specific input, such as psychological support or counselling, then the home will arrange this. Particular requirements based on cultural or religious needs are promoted and met.

Those young people who are in education have a personal education plan (PEP). This outlines what assistance and support they need in order to benefit from their education placements. The staff team are very good at liaising with schools and colleges in order to support their attendance and achievements. It is clear that education is valued and promoted and that the long-term benefits of achieving in education are stressed to the young people.

The staff offer excellent support to young people who are looking for employment or applying to college if they have left school. This approach is underpinned in each young person's independence plan prepared by the key worker. This outlines in detail how the home will support the young person in achieving the goals set out in their pathway plan.

Each young person is encouraged to develop their own recreational interests and is supported to take part in them. For example, young people will attend table tennis club, go to an internet café, go swimming and enjoy shopping trips. Additionally, members of staff have taken young people to festivals and will take them to adventure parks. The staff actively promote interesting and positive activities for the young people. The young people are also able to meet with friends and can have them visit them at the home, ensuring that they are able to be involved in the community and are not isolated.

The support, combined with the staff attitude and commitment to enrich the young people's experiences and promote their education ensures that they have an opportunity to develop their confidence. Young people are able to enjoy degrees of success in areas which have often been experienced as negative, before being admitted to the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Rigorous assessments are made on all relevant and available information regarding the physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of the individual young person. Such assessments are incorporated into plans of care which highlight the individual needs of every young person in line with looked after children (LAC) placement planning. Care plans clearly guide staff in caring for the young people and these plans are regularly reviewed and updated. The quality of the plans enables the staff to provide an excellent standard of care with clear and detailed guidelines in place for them to follow.

The young people are supported to attend any reviews of their care. Key workers also prepare reports for reviews which outline each young person's progress and achievements. Additionally, constant review of the young people's care during team meetings and by regular updating of care plans by the manager and key workers, ensures that the plans are up to date. Plans clearly outline how each individual's needs are to be met.

The particulars of any agreed contact arrangements are recorded in detail and are made clear to the staff as well as the young person concerned. Young people are aware who they can contact and why there may be restrictions on certain contacts. The staff are very sensitive to the fact that some young people may find contact with loved ones and family members a trying and anxious time. Support given to the young people at these times is very carefully thought through.

Wherever possible all placements are planned in advance, although robust assessment of individual needs means that young people can be accommodated at short notice. Once a young person is living at the home they have the routines and rules explained to them and this information is also made clear in their handbook.

Young people are very well prepared to move on. Detailed planning for their independence and development of their self-care skills is in place and this enables the young people to feel more confident about their future.

Young people are given every possible opportunity to express their views and to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. House meetings and key-work sessions take place regularly. Issues discussed at house meetings include menus, activities and behaviour. The atmosphere within the setting enables young people to feel confident to say what they feel to each other and to members of staff. The views of the young people are highly valued and seen as a central element of the function of the home.

Interaction between the staff and the young people is relaxed, good humoured and warm. The staff work hard to ensure that the young people feel listened to and that their views and feelings are valued and important. 'I know they listen to me' was an expression used by one young person.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Specific programmes are in place for each young person as they approach adulthood and these set out a process in which they can develop their self-care and independence skills. Support to the young people is sensitively delivered with an eye for detail and an appreciation by members of staff that the young people they care for may be vulnerable and need close guidance. Each young person has a programme and goals to achieve around developing their independence skills. Goals include areas such as being able to open bank accounts and knowing where to go for advice. The home's independence programme outlines how the young people are progressing towards the goals set out in their pathway plans. The organisation and delivery of the whole process is of an excellent standard.

The young people are able to personalise their rooms with posters and pictures and can choose colour themes and décor when their rooms are refurbished. The home is kept clean and well maintained, there being a maintenance team which responds promptly to any damage or repairs. There is ample space for the young people to receive visitors in private.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

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.

All members of staff receive supervision and appraisals. Members of staff report that support and guidance is readily available from the home's manager and senior managers. Additionally, there are regular team meetings to discuss the running of the home and the young people's behaviour and progress. Policies and procedures, which are regularly reviewed, are readily available.

The training offered to the staff team is varied and regular. There is a rolling training programme for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. The home does not yet have a ratio of 80% of staff who have achieved this qualification. There is an induction plan which ensures that new members of staff are prepared for working in the home. The staff team has enough experience, qualifications skills and enthusiasm to offer excellent levels of support to the young people.

Practice is monitored by managers from other homes operated by the organisation. The visiting managers provide verbal feedback at the end of their monitoring visits, however, the reports written by the managers are not always made available promptly to the home's manager. The home's manager is then unable to evidence in writing that she has addressed any areas of improvement or shortfalls identified in the reports. The manager regularly checks all the areas outlined in Schedule 6, such as restraint and sanctions, medication, accidents, child protection issues and admissions and discharges.

The young people's care plans are very well organised, regularly reviewed and updated and are subject to thorough checks by the manager. This ensures that those caring for the young people have up-to-date and relevant information available to guide them in their care of the young people. All information is securely stored.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Each young person's individual needs are known to the staff team and carefully planned for. Careful assessments of the young people ensures that not only can individual needs be met to an excellent standard, but those of the whole group can continue to be met. Additionally the members of staff attend specific training in acknowledging and promoting equality and diversity and this ensures that all the young people and members of staff experience an environment where difference is valued, acknowledged and accepted.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
32	provide a copy of reports written as a result of monitoring visits, made by external managers, to the registered manager of the home. (Regulation 33 (5) (b))	31/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all risk assessments which identify potential hazards are completed in writing. (NMS 26.2)
- 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 29.5)