

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	28 April 2010
Inspector	Michael McCleave
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	15 October 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 provides six medium to long term placements for young people aged between 10 and 17 years. The accommodation consists of six single bedrooms and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing. Young people have access to a computer to enable them to keep in contact with family and friends using the internet.

The home is in a residential area and is close to a shopping area and public transport. One of the main aims of the setting is to support young people to reach their full potential and to prepare them for independence.

Summary

The home is currently being managed temporarily by a manager from another children's home from within the local authority. The staff team work well together and they are positively motivated by the strong support from the management team.

Young people feel safe living at this home. They enjoy the care provided by staff and it is evident that relationships between the staff and young people are good.

Staff development is a positive feature and all care staff now have the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 In the Caring for Children and Young People. This is commendable.

Equality and diversity is promoted at the home. Young people are encouraged to achieve their educational potential and staff are proactive in establishing partnerships with schools. There is a respect for cultural differences and young people particularly enjoy the meals from other cultures provided at the home.

The building provides young people with a safe secure environment, although parts are somewhat institutional in appearance.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There is a positive emphasis on healthy eating and staff are aware of what makes up a good balanced diet. Young people are encouraged to prepare meals as part of a learning process in preparation for independent living. This is good practice. The staff have introduced the concept of themed meals that represent different cultures. Caribbean dishes in particular, are very popular with the young people some of whom said, 'Caribbean meals are very tasty and staff make a wicked spiced chicken'. Plans are being developed to take the young people out to restaurants in the town to experience the cultural mix of the local area. Any specialist diets based on cultural, health or religious grounds are met. This is a positive approach promoting equality and diversity.

Young people are encouraged to take part in food shopping trips as part of life skills learning. Staff have all completed food hygiene training. Menu planning is good and the young people are actively involved in planning the weekly menu. This supports the preparations for when they move into independence.

Individual health needs are clearly identified in their case files. This information is recorded for each young person detailing how his or her specific and general health issue are to be addressed. Where specialist medical resources are required, staff will ensure that these are provided. The looked after nurse visits the home on a regular basis to carry out medical assessments and to provide young people with personal advice on individual health matters. The nurse and staff are available to give advice on sexual health to the young people.

The home has a medicines policy, procedure and practice guidance. Medications are safely stored and administered by staff who have been trained in medicines administration. Clear records are kept on all medication brought into the home and a well-established stock control and disposal system is in place. All staff are trained in first aid. This ensures that staff can respond to minor injuries.

The young people's health needs are appropriately met and their health is positively promoted by the support available.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff ensure that the privacy of the young people is respected. It is normal practice for staff to knock on bedroom doors before entering and wait for a response inviting them into the bedroom. To enhance safeguarding, there are plans to provide young people with a mobile phone if they do not already own one. This will enable them to keep in contact with the staff at the home and report their whereabouts. This is good practice and promotes their safety.

All confidential information is stored in the office and is locked away to prevent access by unauthorised persons.

There is a council complaints procedure in place. A complaints form is available for the young people to use and this is designed to be age appropriate. Young people said that they have confidence in the staff to deal with any complaints. The children's rights service is available to support young people if they have any concerns. This information is included in the Welcome Pack given to all young people when they initially arrive at this home.

Staff have a clear understanding of child protection procedures and know how to safeguard the welfare of the young people. Staff work with young people on risk taking behaviour to alert them to dangers they may be exposed to within the local community. The young people said they felt safe living in this home. Bullying is not currently an issue, although staff are nevertheless aware that this could take place among the mix of young people. Where appropriate the restorative justice approach is used to deal with any incidence of bullying.

There are procedures in place if a young person goes missing without consent. There is an awareness among staff to treat these situations with sensitivity. All staff have received formal training in behaviour management, including restraint, although this form of behaviour management is not commonly used. Staff engage with young people through discussion during

difficult situations and this is the preferred way of managing tense situations. This is good practice. The system of rewards and sanctions encourages the young people to improve their behaviour. Sanctions are not onerous and generally involve a loss of some privileges or a token financial penalty for damages caused.

The home provides a safe environment for the young people to live in. The maintenance for electrical installations, fire alarm system, portable appliances testing are up-to-date. Fire drills are held regularly including full evacuation of the home and staff have attended training in fire safety awareness. There are risk assessments completed for activities undertaken by the young people. These measures support the safety of the staff and young people.

The home operates to the council's recruitment and selection policy whereby all applicants for employment are required to have full clearances, including a Criminal Records Bureau check and references before commencing their duties. This promotes the safety of young people.

The young people live in a safe home and staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to ensure that the young people are protected from any harm or risk to their well-being.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with positive support that enhances their social and emotional development. A key worker system is operated at the home. This ensures that all young people are provided with individualised support. Additionally, support is provided where required, from the health authority and other professionals such as counsellors and the child and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). Young people are very positive about living in this home and said they are pleased with the support they get from the staff. They were however, less enthusiastic about support from their social workers who they said rarely visited them.

The home has good links with local schools and the appointment of a member of staff as education champion, has strengthened the partnership arrangement with the schools. Staff have a positive approach towards education. They ensure that where a young person is not attending school, there is an educational plan agreed with the school for the young person to work on during the day. Staff provide practical as well as emotional support to the young people who may have difficulties in coping with school work. Daily attendance at school or college, is an expectation at the home and an integral part of the care plan. Staff are positive in their work to provide positive encouragement and support, to enable the young people to achieve their educational potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has a placement plan that details how his or her needs are to be addressed. They are supported by a key worker who ensures the requirements of the plan are implemented. Young people are consulted regularly about their plan and their key worker meets with them to assess how outcomes are being achieved. This is good practice. There are difficulties however, when social workers fail to provide the care staff with full information when young people are initially admitted to the home.

Young people are encouraged to be involved with their statutory reviews. They are supported by their key worker to make their wishes and feelings known. The key workers are responsible for ensuring that consultation takes place with the young people and to involve them in decisions about their lives. This encourages the young people to take ownership for decisions that will have an effect on their future.

All contact arrangements are part of the young people's care plans. The young people are provided with practical support to ensure contact with family and friends is maintained. Key workers have an important role to assist in the organisation of these arrangements. Ideally admissions to the home are planned in advance, involving the young person and their family. Visits are encouraged before they move in and the pace of admission is focused around the young person. This is to make the transition as smooth as possible. Staff are aware of the sensitivities surrounding these occasions. This is the same for when a young person is planning to move out of the home.

Consulting with young people on a range of issues is a strong feature at this home. This includes discussing the plans for their care, talking to them about how the home is run and helping the young people to make decisions on matters that affect them. House meetings are held weekly with the young people to discuss a range of issues relating to life in the home. This is seen by staff as an important part of the care practices at the home. This is demonstrated by staff who said, 'This is the young people's home and young people deserve the respect of knowing what is happening in the home'.

The young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution to the day-to-day life in the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff provide support for any young person leaving care or moving onto another placement. The young people learn life skills through taking part in the daily tasks at the home. This includes shopping for food, carrying out some domestic tasks and preparation of meals. They are expected to keep their bedrooms tidy and they learn about how to budget. Staff work with other professionals to ensure that a pathway plan is developed with the young person, identifying what skills and support will be required. These measures support young people as they prepare for independence.

The location of the home is convenient for schools, leisure facilities, public transport and shops. Although somewhat institutional in design, the décor and furnishings are to a satisfactory standard. The young people have their own individual bedrooms and these are comfortably furnished and decorated. However, some bedroom carpets are damaged and stained. The table in the games room has loose legs. Bathroom facilities are clean and well maintained. The upstairs corridor is bland and appears institutional. The young people have a comfortable lounge on the ground floor where they can socialise and relax. There is a large plasma television linked to satellite channels. The home is located near the main route into the town close to bus stops and local shops.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Staff have a good understanding of the equality and diversity issues. They work actively to promote and improve the understanding of different cultures among the young people. This is done through tackling any racist views using the restorative justice approach involving young people discussing any incidents where racism is an issue. Themed meal nights are used to introduce young people to other cultures such as Asian, Caribbean and European. Any specialist diets based on culture, religion and health are met. There is a strong approach to supporting young people to achieve educationally and to improve their opportunities to become employable when they leave care.

The Statement of Purpose is clear about setting out what care the home provides for young people. It details the resources available at the home and includes staffing information. It is made available to families and placing authorities. The young people's 'Welcome Pack' contains a user-friendly booklet about the home.

The care staff at the home are supervised by senior staff. The home is currently being managed on a temporary basis, by an experienced manager from another children's home. Staff confirm that the current management arrangements are effective and that they are appropriately supported to carry out their care duties.

The staff team work well together. This is a competent staff group who have a range of experiences. All care staff are qualified at National Vocational Qualification level 3 (NVQ) in Caring for Children and Young People. This is commendable and reflects the support of management to staff development.

The number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the care needs of the young people and to support them in their daily activities. The young people are positive about the staff who look after them and no concerns have been highlighted. Young people have a positive relationship with staff and said that staff, 'do their best for us'.

There is a training programme in place for all staff, which includes mandatory training in key areas, such as child protection, first aid, health and safety, medicines and behaviour management. All new staff undergo compulsory induction training. Every member of staff has a personal development plan, which clearly indicates the training they have completed and any planned training to improve professional skills.

The monthly monitoring visits are carried out by an officer from the head office of the children's department and this forms part of the overall quality assurance system of the home. A schedule is in place for the management team to record the monitoring of key records. Case records are kept in secure conditions in the office. It is local authority policy that young people see their records and this is made clear to the young people when they move into the home.

This home is managed efficiently and the staff are supported by a manager who provides effective leadership in the day-to-day operations of the home.

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):

- ensure that the home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment (NMS 24.2)
- ensure that bedroom carpets are of a good quality. (NMS 24.5)