

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC033467
Inspection date	06/10/2010
Inspector	Stephen Graham
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10/02/2010
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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

The home provides long-term residential care for up to six looked after young people, of either gender, from 10 years old up to 17 years. The home is newly built and is three storeys high. There is a garden and play area at the front of the property. There is access to additional play and leisure facilities shared with other provisions on the same site. There are two local youth centres, a swimming pool, local shops and other amenities, all within walking distance. The home is situated on the outskirts of a city and is easily accessed by public transport.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a full unannounced inspection which examined all key national minimum standards.

Young people living at the home benefit from good levels of care. They are encouraged to eat healthily, to contribute their views on menu choice and to practice their cooking skills. They receive outstanding help in meeting their health care needs and in gaining access to the health care services that they need. The staff team are given regular training and receive good support to help them keep young people safe. Young people receive outstanding individual support and are encouraged to be involved in their local community. They receive outstanding encouragement and support to give their views about their care and how the home is run. The staff team work hard to provide a homely environment for young people to live in. The staff team are well qualified and experienced and the home is well organised.

Two shortfalls were identified as a result of this inspection; both relate to aspects of recording and documentation, which only impact in a limited way on the well-being and safety of young people. The room search record does not always clearly indicate that young people themselves are aware that a room search has taken place. The records of some of the checks completed on staff members are poorly presented, with not all required information clearly recorded or stored consistently. This makes it difficult to confirm that checks are thorough.

Improvements since the last inspection

To help ensure that young people are cared for safely, methods of restraint used at the home have been reviewed to ensure that they follow agreed policies and procedures. The staff team have received further instruction to ensure that they are aware of, and do not exceed, the measures they can take to prevent a child leaving

without permission under current legislation and government guidance. The staff team have also worked to improve the quality of recording within the record of sanctions and to provide sufficient detail of the individual behaviour leading to the imposition of each sanction.

To help ensure that young people live in a home which is well organised, the recording within the admission and discharge register has been improved to include all of the information required by the regulations. Reports demonstrating the quality of the monthly monitoring of the home, are now completed in sufficient detail.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people living at the home receive outstanding help from staff to meet their health needs. They are actively encouraged to be involved in menu choice and regularly contribute their ideas to menu planning. The menus maintained by staff clearly demonstrate how these ideas are incorporated into the food provided. Young people confirmed that they get enough to eat and drink and can shop for food with staff. Some young people like to regularly practice their cooking skills and receive good support from staff when doing this. The meals provided by staff are varied and include healthy choices and examples of food from different cultures. Individual records of the food actually eaten by each young person are kept to help demonstrate that they are eating a suitable and varied diet. A key staff member works to implement the 'healthy living' programme introduced at the home. Young people complete written agreements with staff to encourage them to eat more healthily. Financial incentives are also regularly provided to support this.

The staff team work closely with placing social workers and a range of health professionals, including specialist health advisors. They complete detailed risk assessments and health care plans for each young person. This helps to ensure that the individual support provided to young people is well planned and co-ordinated and that young people gain access to the health services that they need. A number of placing social workers and health professionals wrote to describe positively the support provided to young people in meeting their health needs. They described how staff team members are pro-active in contacting health professionals and specialist services when advice is needed and how the staff team manage complex health needs and monitor and keep medical appointments. They also describe the home as providing healthy activities, healthy food and a clean and safe environment.

The staff team are trained in emergency first aid and also receive training and guidance to help ensure that any medication needed by young people is administered safely. The manager regularly monitors health records to help ensure that agreed plans are being implemented effectively. Young people themselves confirm that the staff team look after them if they are feeling unwell and help them to access the health services they need.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements in place to help make sure that children are cared for safely. The staff team follow agreed guidance to ensure that these records are safely stored. Young people are encouraged to add their own comments to their care records. Arrangements are in place to allow room checks to be completed, if this is ever necessary, to help keep children safe. However, the central record kept of these does not always clearly indicate that young people themselves are aware that a search has been necessary.

Visitors to the home are supervised by the staff team to ensure that young people are safe when visitors are present. A detailed record of visitors is maintained to demonstrate who has visited the home and for what reason. Checks are completed on staff team members to ensure that they themselves are suitable to work with children. However, not all of the information required is gathered and kept for reference on each staff file.

To help keep young people safe and protect them from abuse, the staff team regularly attend and refresh their agreed safeguarding training. Detailed guidance is in place and agreements regarding reporting procedures have been confirmed with each placing authority. Detailed risk assessments are completed to help protect each young person living at the home. Placing social workers describe how in their experience staff encourage young people to act safely and are also vigilant for the safety of young people. They describe how risk assessments are used to respond to challenging behaviours. They also describe how reports received regarding the safety of young people are 'excellent' and how the staff team regularly communicate with them regarding any safety concerns. Young people confirm they received good advice and support from staff to help keep them safe. There are agreed procedures in place to help staff record and respond to any complaints they may receive. The records maintained demonstrate how these are responded to promptly and are investigated thoroughly. There are clear procedures in place which are used to help ensure that if young people are ever missing they are found and kept safe, as quickly as possible.

The home has introduced a central record of any instances of bullying occurring at the home. This helps them to monitor all events and to plan strategies to help reduce the number of events. Bullying issues are discussed regularly with young people in their weekly house meetings, as well as individually with their own key worker. The records maintained demonstrate how the staff team talk with young people if any such events occur. Staff work to prevent any further instances by promoting positive relationships between young people. The staff team are trained in the appropriate use of physical restraint and use this where this is necessary to help keep young people safe. There is agreed guidance for staff to follow when sanctions are imposed.

Risk assessments are used by staff to help ensure that the home is a safe place for

young people to live in. Regular checks are undertaken on the safety equipment in place to protect young people. The staff team and young people regularly practice what they should do if any emergency should occur at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people living at the home receive good levels of close individual support. Detailed records are maintained by the staff team which help demonstrate this. The daily staffing arrangements work in support of each young person's individual care plan. The manager constantly monitors staffing levels and adjusts these where necessary. They also monitor individual care records regularly. This helps ensure that the individual needs of each young person are met. Each placing social worker is provided with detailed, regular written and verbal updates to demonstrate the progress being made in the care of each young person. Social workers provide good examples of the care and support provided by staff to young people, including the support they receive with hobbies and personal interests. Young people are also encouraged and supported by the staff team to take part in a broad range of age appropriate social and recreational activities in their local community.

Young people also receive outstanding help in meeting their educational and future employment needs. All young people currently living at the home are engaged in education and are attending regularly. The staff team liaise very closely and positively with schools and colleges to help young people maintain their engagement. Good records are maintained which helps demonstrate both this and the regular individual success achieved by young people through their participation. The home has a learning room with good resources and access to computers to assist young people in their learning. Young people also confirm that they have enough space, resources and equipment to help them with their learning. Placing social workers describe very positively how staff have help young people into mainstream education and maintain good contact with schools. They describe how staff support and encourage young people in their education and liaise with schools and work. They also ensure personal education plans for each young person are kept up to date.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The care provided to young people living at the home is recorded within written care plans made in agreement with their placing social workers. These are completed in good detail and are maintained for reference. Care plans are closely monitored by the manager to help ensure that they are implemented as agreed by individual key-workers and the staff team. Young people say they are regularly asked for their opinion about the care they receive. They discuss their plans with their key worker and their views are added to their care records. Updates on the progress being made in meeting their care plans are provided very regularly and in detail to their placing social workers. One placing social worker describes the 'regular calls and reports' that

they receive from the home.

Another placing social worker describes the 'regular care planning team meetings' that are organised to discuss ongoing care planning for young people. Key workers for each young person living at the home provide detailed written reports to the formal review meetings. Meetings are held regularly and young people themselves are encouraged to attend in person. Some also write down their own views for these meetings. Formal outcome reports from the meetings are provided by each placing authority. These arrangements help facilitate good information sharing and joint planning to further improve outcomes for young people.

Although there have been no recent admissions to the home, there are good arrangements in place to help ensure that when young people first move in, they are admitted safely. Procedures to complete risk assessments in partnership with placing social workers are in place. The staff team also have detailed procedures to follow to help young people settle in quickly and safely. Written agreements are made with placing social workers regarding contact arrangements for each young person. The staff team monitor these arrangements to ensure that they remain safe and suitable for young people.

The arrangements in place to encourage young people to share their views and ideas on how the home is run are outstanding. Very regular, weekly house meetings are arranged and good records are kept of the feelings and anxieties young people have expressed and the suggestions young people have made. These suggestions are also discussed at staff team meetings. The records demonstrate clearly how some of these have been implemented in the overall running of the home. Young people can also talk individually with staff or their key worker at any time and the views they express are recorded in detail in their care files.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements in place to encourage older young people to practice and develop their independent life skills. Young people are encouraged by staff to practice their self care skills, including budgeting. They also receive opportunities to be involved in shopping and cooking. Care files contain good evidence of how the progress young people make in developing these skills is monitored by the staff team. Their individual progress is regularly reviewed. One placing social worker describes how their young person is 'involved in day-to-day decisions around meals, shopping, managing a budget'. The staff team also provide good support to older young people in their further education and try to provide opportunities for work experience, where this is possible.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. The staff team monitor the condition of the home to try and minimise any risks to the health and safety of the young people living there. They work to maintain a homely and comfortable

environment throughout. Young people are helped by staff to personalise their own bedroom space.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a Statement of Purpose in place which contains clear information about the service provided at the home. This is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure that it remains accurate and up to date. Young people also receive their own guide to the home. It contains good information about how the service is provided and who young people should speak to if they need any further advice.

The staffing levels at the home are good and the staff team have good experience in working with young people. The staff team are also well qualified. They receive regular opportunities to further improve their skills by participating in a good variety of additional training events. The manager continually monitors and adjusts staffing levels to help ensure that young people living at the home are receiving the support they need each day.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The 'in house' training package provided to staff working at the home helps to ensure this. Young people receive outstanding individual support and are encouraged to share their views on their care and how the home is run. They also receive outstanding support based on their individual needs. The staff team work closely with their placing social workers and external professionals to help provide this.

The manager has good systems in place to help them monitor the home's records, which are used to ensure that the overall care provided to young people is good. Independent visits also take place regularly to help monitor the care provided at the home. Young people's files are very well maintained and kept safely stored. They include all of the information needed by staff to care successfully for young people.

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
27	ensure full and satisfactory is available in respect of Schedule 2. In particular information is obtained and maintained for reference within staff files. (Regulation 26 (3) (d))	30/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that room search records are completed in sufficient detail to demonstrate that the reasons for the search have been explained to the child concerned (NMS 9.8)