

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Graham
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	29 September 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

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

Young people living at the home benefit from good levels of care. They are encouraged to have a healthy lifestyle, to eat healthily and to be involved in menu choice. The staff team receive good guidance and regular training to help them keep young people safe. However, some care practices need to be reviewed to ensure that the staff team are not working in breach of their own and government guidance. Young people are supported in their employment and education and are encouraged to give their views about how the home is run. The building is well maintained and provides a homely environment for young people to live in. The home is well organised and has a well qualified and experienced staff team. The quality of care provided at the home is regularly monitored. Reports are produced from this, but do not always include sufficient detail regarding the matters monitored.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

To help ensure that young people are cared for safely, the record maintained of any restraint occurring at the home is now completed in better detail.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people living at the home receive good help from staff to meet their health needs. They are encouraged to contribute their ideas to menu planning through the regular young people's meetings. One young person described how staff 'tell us to have veg and fruit and not a lot of junk food.' A record is kept of the meals prepared and provided to young people and the staff team receive training in food hygiene. Menus are varied and include healthy choices and examples of food from a variety of cultures. All young people living at the home confirmed that they receive enough to eat and drink and are involved in menu choice and food preparation. One said, 'Yes we can discuss when we do the kids menu.' They also gave very positive examples of how the staff team encourage them to participate in a variety of healthy activities.

The staff team receive regular training and follow detailed health and medication procedures to ensure that any medication or first aid treatment needed by young people is administered safely. Individual health profiles are maintained for each young person, as are records of any accidents occurring or treatment received by them. All young people confirmed that they are registered with the health services they need. One young person described how staff 'tell us to go to bed and they will make an appointment to see a doctor or a dentist for a toothache.'

Detailed records are maintained of their attendance at routine appointments, their access to health services for looked after children and additional specialist advice where this is necessary.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are good arrangements at the home to help make sure that children are cared for safely. All of the young people living at the home told us that the staff team give them good advice about staying safe. Staff are given clear guidance and training about how case records should be written and kept safely stored. Room checks take place, if this is necessary, to help keep children safe. Young people are informed when these checks are necessary and the staff team keep a clear record of the reasons why it occurred and the outcome of each search.

Staff check to make sure that any visitors to the home are suitable and that young people are safe when visitors are present. Visitors are asked to sign the visitors' book and are closely supervised by staff. Staff undergo thorough checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people from abuse are good. Regular training is provided to staff and they have access to detailed guidance to help them to keep children safe. They complete detailed risk assessments, in discussion with young people and in partnership with their social workers. There are clear procedures in place at the home to be used if young people were ever missing. These help to ensure that they would be found and kept safe, as quickly as possible. Records indicated that some care practice at the home contradicts agreed guidance on the restriction of liberty.

Young people are provided with complaints information and can raise any concerns they may have. Any complaints received are recorded and investigated promptly. Young people describe how they would, 'talk to a member of staff' or 'tell a grown up and ask for help' if they ever had any concerns. The staff team are provided with guidance to help them protect young people from bullying and regularly discuss any issues with individual young people, and the group as a whole. Training is also provided to staff in how to use physical restraint to keep children safe and in how to record any incidents that occur. The records indicated that some methods described contradict the agreed policies and procedures, the staff training provided and central government guidance. There are agreed procedures for staff to follow if sanctions are imposed. However, the record of sanctions does not always include sufficient detail of the individual behaviour leading to the imposition of each sanction. A range of incentives are used by staff to help promote positive behaviour by young people.

Risk assessments and health and safety checklists are used by staff to help ensure that the home is a safe place for young people to live in. Any repairs needed are notified promptly and routine checks are undertaken on the safety equipment. The staff team are trained to know what to do if there is an emergency and they practice this regularly with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff team follow clear policies and guidance which help ensure that each young person living at the home receives good levels of close individual support. Young people are encouraged to give their views on their care needs and have very regular discussions with their key workers

about the support they receive to meet these. The staff team fully support the participation of young people in a range of hobbies and interests in the local community. Young people spoken with gave a number of examples of the social interests they have such as football, canoeing and judo and confirmed that they are helped to participate in these by staff.

Young people also receive good support from staff in meeting their educational needs. All young people responded very positively when asked, 'Are you given enough help with your school and college work?' Nearly all also felt that they have enough space and the right things they needed to help them in their education. Key workers and the staff team as a whole work closely with schools and colleges to promote and support good outcomes for young people. Staff regularly attend relevant meetings and provide written reports as necessary. A range of agreed incentives are used to promote attendance and reward achievement. All of the young people living at the home are currently engaged in education. The home has sufficient space, resources and equipment to help young people with their learning. Placing social workers are given regular updates by staff regarding the progress of each young person in their education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Detailed care plans for each young person living at the home are agreed and recorded. Detailed records of the ongoing care and support provided are maintained by staff. These help to demonstrate that the care plans put in place are being followed. Young people regularly discuss these plans with their key workers and are encouraged to give their views and to sign their own care records. Review meetings are held regularly for each young person to discuss progress with their care plan. Key workers prepare detailed reports for these meetings. All of the young people currently living at the home confirm that they are able to make their views known and are able to have a say in what happens in the home.

The staff team work in close partnership with placing social workers and use the procedures in place to help young people feel welcome and settle in quickly when they come to live at the home. A register is maintained of young people who come to live at the home as well as when they leave. However, the register used does not record all of the information required by the regulations.

The home has policies and procedures in place which are used by staff to support young people in maintaining contact with family and friends where this is appropriate. Contact arrangements are agreed by staff, young people and their placing social workers. A clear record is kept of this and the contact as it occurs. Staff help monitor arrangements and highlight any concerns that may arise to help ensure that young people remain safe.

Young people are encouraged to give their views about how the home is run through regular house meetings. The staff team help young people to keep a record of the house meetings and the ideas and suggestions they have made. Young people also talk very regularly with their own key worker and other members of staff and their individual views are recorded clearly in their own care files.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive good support from staff at the home to help them practice the skills they will need to live successfully and independently when they are older. The progress young people make in developing these skills is recorded and regularly reviewed by staff in partnership with young people and their social workers. Some of the young people gave examples of the practical support they receive from staff to help them develop these skills. One said, 'I cook my own snacks at times.' The service has further improved the support provided to older young people, who now take more responsibility for budgeting their toiletry and clothing allowances. Young people are also supported by staff to participate in work experience placements and are helped to take responsibility for planning and organising group sporting events.

The home is decorated and furnished to a generally good standard. It is recently built and designed to create a very homely and comfortable environment for young people to live in. The staff team routinely monitor the furniture, fittings and equipment at the home. Some graffiti damage to wall surfaces in communal areas has occurred and this is in the process of repair and re-decoration. Any damage occurring in the building is logged and dealt with to ensure that the home remains a safe place for young people to live in.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which is regularly reviewed and updated. There is also a young people's guide, used to help them to understand how the service is provided and who to speak to if they need any further advice. The guidance for young people has been recently updated and is presented to a good standard.

The staff team at the home are well qualified and experienced in working with children and young people. All staff are encouraged to add to their qualifications and regularly attend additional training courses and briefings. Staffing levels are monitored and adjusted to help ensure that the needs of young people living at the home are met on a daily basis. There are clear arrangements in place to deputise for the manager if they themselves are ever absent.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Guidance and training for staff working at the home helps to ensure this.

There are systems in place to monitor the home's records and to create monthly reports and recommendations. Some reports are not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate the quality of the monitoring completed. Young people's files are well maintained and presented. They contain 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 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
22	ensure that all methods of restraint used at the home follow agreed policies and procedures (Regulation 17.2)	31 March 2010

5	ensure that recording within the admission and discharge register includes all of the information required by the regulations. (Regulation 29.1)	31 March 2010
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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 all staff 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 (NMS 19.7)
- ensure that the record of sanctions includes sufficient detail of the individual behaviour leading to the imposition of each sanction (NMS 22.10)
- ensure that reports are completed in sufficient detail to fully demonstrate the quality of the monthly monitoring of the home and its operation. (NMS 32.2) and (NMS 33.4)