

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034083
Inspection date	22 July 2009
Inspector	Anne Bannister
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	5 March 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 is one of a number of residential homes, which are owned and managed by the County Council. It is a purpose-built children's home situated within a housing estate on the outskirts of a small town. The home is within easy reach of all local amenities and there is a regular bus service in to the town centre. The home accommodates up to six young people of either gender, whose ages range from 12 years old up to 17 years old. Each young person has an individual bedroom. The home works cooperatively with other agencies in order to meet the specific needs of the young people being looked after. The main aim of the home is to enable young people to return to foster placements or family, or to live independently in the community, in accordance with their agreed care plan.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection and so all the key national minimum standards were assessed. There were no actions or recommendations to be followed up from the previous inspection.

Many aspects of the care provided to young people are outstanding with the remainder being judged as good. The arrangements in place to meet young people's health needs are good. The arrangements to safeguard and promote the safety and welfare of young people are judged outstanding. Achieving immediate positive outcomes for young people who may be in a state of personal crises when admitted can be difficult. However, individual needs are recognised and comprehensive plans put into place. The unit has excellent links with a variety of external services and agencies. The Registered Manager and the experienced staff team have considerable skills, which encourages young people to achieve well in education, training or employment. There is a clear ethos of enabling young people to achieve their potential. Young people are also enabled to have a say in the direction of their own lives and about how the home is run. This enables them to feel valued and raises their self esteem. The management and organisation of the unit is outstanding. The highly motivated staff team have worked together for some time, a contributing factor to the stability and consistency of practice provided. No major issues or concerns were raised by either staff or young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The report from the previous inspection contained no actions or recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The outcome for being healthy is judged as being good. This is supported by the collective approaches taken by the home to meet the health needs of young people.

Young people are provided with a varied, healthy diet. Young people have a choice at meal times and have input into the planning of menus. The staff member recently delegated to oversee menu planning ensures locally sourced produce is used. Meal times are observed to be relaxed, social occasions. Young people spoken to said the food provided is good.

Young people's health needs are thoroughly assessed. Health information is obtained from placing social workers, so that staff have a clear understanding of the young people's health needs and how these are to be met. Health plans are detailed documents, addressing specific personalised needs. Practice in the home is for all young people to be registered with local health professionals, such as the doctor, dentist and optician. The home operates procedures that comply with the administration and safekeeping of medicines. These are effectively monitored by a senior member of staff. All staff administering medicines have received appropriate training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The staff team is highly committed to ensuring that young people in their care are protected from harm.

The home has suitable policies on privacy and confidentiality. Staff show respect for young people's privacy and the importance of maintaining confidentiality is key to the good practice displayed by staff. Relationships between staff and young people are good and create a supportive and nurturing atmosphere in which young people feel comfortable. Arrangements for complaints and dealing with bullying are handled well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. Young people indicate that bullying is not tolerated in the home and that when it does occur 'staff deal with it'. Young people are also clear that they do not need to use the formal complaints system, as they are able to raise things informally with staff and feel issues are dealt with. None of the young people raised concerns about any of the issues linked to being safe. They feel that the unit is a safe place to be and that staff are generally fair.

All staff spoken to have a good understanding of safeguarding procedures and a rolling programme of training for all staff is in place, to ensure that they have and maintain the skills to protect young people from abuse. These actions show the home has appropriate practices, policies and procedures in place to protect young people from abuse.

There is a clear and comprehensive behaviour management policy, which is consistently used by all staff. Positive behaviours are seen to be praised as a matter of routine, unacceptable behaviour is calmly challenged. Staff are skilled at identifying and recognising situations when young people's behaviours are likely to deteriorate and work as a whole staff team, to assist young people in identifying a more positive manner in dealing with situations. Records of incidents of physical intervention indicate that none have occurred since the previous inspection. This indicates the success of the behaviour management policies implemented in the home and the success of the strategies put in place to encourage positive behaviours.

The home has a written procedure for how staff must respond when young people are absent without authority. There is careful monitoring of the number of instances when this occurs and actions are taken by staff to try to ensure that young people are not continuing to place themselves at risk by this practice.

The home notifies all relevant agencies and carers of significant incidents which affects the well-being of young people.

The home has risk assessments in place for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds. There are also risk assessments relating to young people's behaviours and planned activities they undertake. These risk assessments are regularly reviewed and updated to ensure young people's continued safety. Visitors are welcomed into the home once they have satisfied staff of their identity and the purpose of their visit and have signed the visitors book. All fire drills, fire alarm tests and fire safety equipment checks are up-to-date. All gas and electrical appliances receive an annual check. These actions show the home is committed to ensuring young people live in a safe and secure environment.

There is thorough selection and vetting of all staff working at the home prior to employment that meets the requirements of Standard 27 of the Children's Home national minimum standards. All required pre-employment checks are carried out and staff recruitment records are well maintained. These actions show the home takes suitable measures to ensure staff employed are suitable to be working with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are clear that there are a number of staff they can go to for personal support. Young people are set objectives for both care and education and have the opportunity to review their objectives at fortnightly link worker sessions. Young people value these meetings and state that the care staff who work with them are 'good'. They are proud of their home and feel that it is a good place for them to be. The staff team is very skilled at recognising and celebrating young people's achievements and personal successes.

Whilst reluctance may be shown by some young people to engage positively with their education, staff are proactive in encouraging and arranging school attendance. Staff work closely with agencies to facilitate education attendance. Appropriate educational arrangements are in place for each young person, supported by education and personal education plans. Feedback from key educational agencies is positive, with the looked after children's education service indicating that the relationships staff have with young people have provided young people with 'the motivation, support and extra encouragement they need. Without staff commitment, the significant improvements in attendance and outcomes for young people would not have been achieved'. All young people have clear, measurable education targets and records of the educational attainment are maintained and celebrated.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home has a number of care planning documents which, when read collectively, provide good information on young people's individual needs and how they will be met. Plans cover all areas required and they are regularly reviewed. Young people's views and those of significant others are sought when forming and reviewing care plans.

Young people are assisted to maintain constructive contact with parents, family and other people significant in their lives. Contact arrangements are discussed at the time of the young people's admission and are recorded in their placement plan. Staff in the home work closely with the young people's families and carers. Feedback from family visiting the home during the inspection indicates that they feel extremely well supported by the staff team. Young

people's views and those of their parents/carers and placing authorities are regularly sought and taken in to account.

Young people are clear that they are encouraged to be involved in all aspects of planning for their future. They benefit from weekly residents meetings to discuss issues relating to community living as well as one to one sessions with their link workers. Young people are clear that they are able to approach any member of staff at any time to discuss issues. They are also given support which enables them to participate in staff recruitment and appraisal. They have opportunities to become involved with Action 4 groups, which discuss issues relating to young people in the care system. Young people also attend events organised by the Children's Rights Officer, which encourages young people to have their say about the services they receive.

There are suitable procedures in place for young people moving in to the home. Young people visit the home before admission, they meet with staff and young people resident and they are given relevant information on how the home operates. The home does not accept emergency admissions. Young people already resident are informed and consulted about new admissions and the manager takes into account any possible impact new admissions may have on those already resident.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and helped to develop independent living skills to help them look after themselves. These include assisting in the planning of menus, shopping and preparation of food. The home liaises closely with placing authorities, parents/carers and other agencies to ensure suitable placements are arranged for young people when they leave the home. The staff team works with young people on personalised programmes to support the development of their skills. These link into pathway plans when young people reach this stage of their development.

Documentation shows that when young people show particular skills and interests, the care staff team will find and support them in work placements to develop their skills and self confidence. The development of young people's self awareness, self confidence and life skills in preparation for leaving care is key to the service provided by the home.

The home is well furnished and decorated, providing a warm, comfortable and homely place for the young people living there. There is a rolling programme of refurbishment that ensures young people's living areas are maintained to a good standard. Each young person has access to a single bedroom and all bedrooms are well furnished and personalised. Communal areas are well decorated and maintained.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home is well managed and efficiently run, providing a safe and stable environment for the young people living there. The Registered Manager is well supported and supervised by senior managers and provides clear management for the care staff team. The care staff team demonstrates an awareness of their roles and responsibilities that ensures young people's assessed needs are being met.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. There is a detailed policy and guidance. Fairness is key to staff practice when ensuring positive experiences are gained. Good relationships and the positive application of rewards are considered when assessing the effective use of sanctions. Cultural identity and links to heritage are reflected within the choices being made on how bedrooms are personalised. The quality and detail of care plans ensures personalised services are provided that are capable of meeting young people's personal needs. Ongoing consultation ensures that the young people are fully involved with all aspects of their lives as well as the management and organisation of the home.

The statement of purpose and young people's guide provides a detailed picture about the service. This includes what the home's function and purpose is and what things young people need to know about living at the home. On admission, all young people receive a user friendly guide that tells them what they should expect from the home, including their rights to express issues about living in the home which they may not be happy with.

Senior managers and all other staff are very committed to providing high quality care for young people and monitor and review their practice to improve the service they are providing.

There is a competent and experienced care staff team, with a good range of experience. The skills of the staff team are well matched to caring for the young people who are accommodated in the home. The staff training programme includes a comprehensive induction. All staff have a personal development plan, which is reviewed and updated as part of their annual performance appraisal. Staff are positive in their comments about the training provided and state any specialist training required to ensure they can meet a young person's needs is provided. These actions show the home takes suitable measures to ensure they have an appropriately qualified and trained care staff team.

Regular staff meetings are held each week to ensure consistency in practice across the staff team. Duty rotas indicate that the number of staff on duty is sufficient to meet the needs of the young people and to support them in their activities, visits and appointments. Staff morale is high, resulting in an enthusiastic workforce which works positively with young people to improve their quality of life.

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

There are no recommendations.