

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC034797
Inspection date	17/11/2010
Inspector	Dorrit Andrews
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	25/03/2010
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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

This children's home is operated by a local authority. It provides long term residential care for up to six children and young people of either gender between the ages of 12 and 17 years. The home is a six bedroom, two-storey detached property owned by the local authority. It is located in the suburbs of a city and is within easy reach of local amenities and transport links.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced full inspection and all key standards were inspected. Five children are currently live at the home, three of whom contributed to the inspection. All of the outcome areas were covered. Being healthy, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and economic wellbeing have been judged as outstanding. Staying safe and organisation have been judged as good.

Young people are provided with a good level of care and highly individualised support. Staff have a very good knowledge and understanding of young people's individual needs and work in partnership with other professionals to support young people to develop, progress and achieve.

Young people benefit from good management of the home, and competent and experienced staff who are sufficient in number to meet their needs. Staff have access to a range of training to support them in their work; The open, nurturing environment and effective individual work with young people are particular strengths of the home.

Young people say they 'feel safe and protected', the food is 'very good' and staff support them with their health needs. Relatives praise the work of the home and report that staff 'support family contact' and 'keep them up to date'. Social workers comments were highly positive and included, 'staff take things at the children's pace whilst enabling and empowering them to become more independent', and staff 'have the welfare of children at heart and are prepared to go that extra mile to support them'.

Records and documentation are maintained to a good standard overall. However, risk assessments in relation to countering bullying and to the premises are in need of review. In addition, the home's Statement of Purpose does not provide full details of its staffing policy or detail the current use of an electronic door monitoring device.

One action and three recommendations have been raised in relation to these matters.

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were raised at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The health needs of young people are extremely well met and their physical and emotional health is strongly promoted. Young people benefit greatly from staff who are open to discussing a range of health and welfare topics with them, including relationships, maintaining a healthy diet, keeping safe and personal hygiene.

Menus are compiled in consultation with young people and take account of individual food preferences. Meals provided are varied, balanced and cater for dietary needs. Young people comment that the food is 'very good'; they are encouraged to try new things and thoroughly enjoy themed meals and celebrations. Those young people engaged in independence plans are supported according to their individual needs to budget for food, shop and prepare meals. Meal times are organised, social occasions and staff and young people eat together. These practices enable young people to develop knowledge and skills for the future.

The health care needs of each young person are identified and health care services and guidance are sought to meet these needs. Comprehensive records are maintained of health checks and follow-up treatment, including times when young people have refused to attend. Young people are accompanied to appointments at their request and report that staff respond to health needs and make appointments as necessary. Participation in activities and interests outside of the home is encouraged to support young people's emotional and physical well-being. Examples include attendance at youth clubs, horse riding, football and aromatherapy sessions.

Staff are trained in first aid and administering medicines and including use of refresher courses. Medication is securely stored with additional safety precautions in place for the storage of controlled drugs. Written agreements are on file for young people self-medicating and for the administering of medication during contact visits and overnight stays. Very good records are kept of accidents, treatment and medication and effective monitoring and auditing systems are operated to ensure correct procedures are followed. Staff also have established links with local health services for advice. These practices contribute to young people's overall health and well-being.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff have access to a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and guidance to support them in keeping young people safe and promoting their welfare. Effective working partnerships between the home and other professionals, including social workers, psychologists and educational establishments also contribute to the safeguarding of young people's welfare. All staff receive safeguarding training relevant to their role and demonstrate good knowledge of their duties and responsibilities. Keeping safe matters are discussed regularly with young people including personal and general safety issues. Young people report that they feel safe and protected at the home.

Young people's privacy is highly respected and staff are sensitive to the individual circumstances of young people and their families. Young people are able to lock their bedroom doors, retain their own key and access their room at any time. Confidential information is appropriately handled and securely stored.

Young people know how to raise concerns or make a complaint about matters they are unhappy with. The home encourages discussion of concerns at an early stage before they develop into major problems and staff create a range of opportunities to facilitate discussions. These include daily contact with young people, ready access to the manager and regular residents' meetings. The issue of some young people being disturbed by the loud music of others has recently been satisfactorily resolved through group discussion. Records are maintained of complaints and their outcome. No complaints have been received by Ofsted in relation to the home.

Bullying is not tolerated within the home. Individual risk assessments highlight behaviours of concern and staff are vigilant to potential conflicts. Significant incidents are recorded and monitored and a risk assessment is in place of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest. However, this risk assessment is not up to date.

Clear procedures are in place for when young people are absent without authority. Young people are responded to positively on their return, significant others are kept informed and good records are kept of when incidents have occurred. Incidents of young people being absent without leave are low; one incident is recorded since the last inspection.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop socially acceptable behaviour. For example, positive behaviour is praised and the impact and consequences of a young person's negative behaviour is discussed with them. Work is also undertaken in partnership with parents and carers in relation to issues of consistency and the setting of boundaries. Behaviour management training is provided to staff and is regularly updated. Few sanctions are used and the use of physical intervention is rare. There has been no use of physical intervention since

2009. Sanctions used are well recorded, include young people's comments and evidence good monitoring and follow up by the Registered Manager. Young people regard the home's expectations as 'fair' and say they are listened to by staff.

Risk assessments are carried out in relation to the premises, grounds and activities. Overall a good system of review is in place. However, the home's risk assessment in relation to the premises is not up to date. Servicing records evidence regular cycles of maintenance and prompt follow up of repairs required. Fire evacuation drills take place at different times and staff and young people are familiar with procedures. These measures contribute to the maintenance of a safe environment for young people, staff and visitors.

Good procedures are in place for the careful selection and vetting of all staff working at the home. Records of visitors are maintained and proof of identification is requested where appropriate. These practices reduce potential risks to the welfare of young people living at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent individualised support in line with their needs and wishes and benefit from the home's highly effective working partnerships with external agencies and individual social workers. For example, co-working with adult learning disability teams to support transition, joint working with child and adolescent mental health teams and facilitating family contact by staff staying overnight. These practices support the maintenance of individual placements and are a particular strength of the team. Key workers are appointed to co-ordinate information and work in relation to individual placement plans. However, all staff are involved in the day-to-day care of young people and have very good knowledge of their specific needs. Young people confirm that staff involve them in discussions about their lives and they are able to talk to a range of staff.

Staff encourage the involvement of all young people in the daily life of the home and endeavour to nurture positive friendships between young people through the respect and tolerance of others. Young people's individuality is acknowledged and they are supported and encouraged to pursue activities outside of the home where possible, including meeting up with friends and engaging in sporting activities. Involvement in such activities enables young people to negotiate their place within the community.

Education is actively promoted and supported. Great emphasis is placed on the value of education in itself and the wider context of preparing young people for adulthood. Effective links are maintained with educational establishments and young people have good access to a local library and resources within the home including computers. The routine of the home is organised to support each individual's educational programme, including those who are not in school and those engaged in further education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Admissions to the home are planned as far as possible with some placements occasionally being made at short notice. The needs of the individual concerned and the likely effect of their admission on the existing group of young people are assessed prior to an admission decision being made. Very good examples of assessments are on file and illustrate individual profiles, group dynamics and the strategies put in place to counter identified risks. A welcome guide is provided and staff support young people by going through key information with them and explaining the day-to-day routine of the home. Memories of a young person's stay are collated and recorded through achievement records, photographs and memorabilia.

Young people are consulted throughout the planning process before moving on and benefit from high levels of individualised support. For example, pathway plans and transitional plans are compiled in consultation with young people and are used to plan work and support them in preparing to move on.

Young people benefit from having their needs assessed effectively and regularly reviewed. Detailed management plans and equality and diversity statements set out how individual needs will be met and young people are involved in discussing, reviewing and updating their plans on a regular basis. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend placement meetings and reviews by staff and their social workers. The home keeps independent reviewing officers informed of significant events in young people's lives in between reviews.

Young people are supported to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and significant others in their lives. Individual contact arrangements are discussed with young people and other parties involved and clearly recorded in management plans. Staff provide excellent support to young people to enable them to maintain and re-establish appropriate contact with their families and other important individuals in their lives. For example, they provide transport, facilitate supervised contact where necessary, stay over night and accompany individuals on public transport to develop their confidence before travelling alone.

Young people's views are valued. They are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to contribute their ideas and suggestions in relation to the running of the home. Key worker sessions and preparation for placement meetings offer regular opportunities to consult with young people about their care, progress and plans for the future. Daily contact with staff and residents' meetings provide time to discuss wider issues in relation to the home. Recent changes made as a result of listening to young people include individual visits to places of interest, having a holiday abroad and changes to independence skills programmes.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive individualised care which helps to prepare them for adulthood. For example, young people are supported to manage money, shop for clothes and food, prepare and cook meals and use public transport. Independence training plans are tailored to individual needs and capabilities and are compiled in consultation with young people and their social workers. Domestic tasks within the home are shared between male and female members of staff which promotes positive role modelling. For example, male staff support boys with their ironing and show them how to attend to small clothing repairs. The skills young people acquire empowers them to develop further and increases their confidence and self-esteem. For example, young people are able to confidently use public transport independently to attend college and visit family and friends.

Young people are provided with homely accommodation, decorated, furnished and maintained to a very good standard. Accommodation is clean and tidy and of domestic style. Each young person has their own room which they are encouraged to personalise and keep clean with the support of staff where necessary. Communal areas provide young people with a choice of rooms for relaxing, watching television and playing games. Private bath, shower and toilet facilities are available to young people and are sufficient in number to meet their needs. Separate facilities are provided for staff and visitors.

Garden areas are maintained by an external contractor but young people are able to utilise areas for their own gardening purposes if they wish. The rear garden offers seating and grassed areas, providing space for activities such as football and barbecues. An outside recreation room provides all year round facilities for playing pool, listening to music and other activities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose is in place, readily available and regularly reviewed. However, information on the current use of a door monitor on a first floor landing is not included as required. Young people are provided with a separate welcome guide containing useful information about the home, expectations regarding behaviour and care provided.

Management of the home is good and young people are looked after by competent staff who are sufficient in number, experience and training to meet their needs. A programme of induction is provided to new staff to familiarise them with the daily workings of the home. A system of formal supervision is in place for all staff and provision is made for informal and ad hoc supervision as and when required. Staff

receive appropriate induction training and subsequently access a rolling programme of mandatory and refresher training to support their work and development. These practices ensure young people receive the care they need from competent staff. A written record of staff training is kept and staff have ready access to a set of comprehensive policies and procedures which have recently been reviewed.

Effective management of staffing contributes to continuity and consistency of care. For example, the home calls upon its own relief staff to cover absences and established arrangements are in place for when the manager is absent or on holiday. Back up support is available through the home's on-call system and young people are made aware of who is on duty during the day and night. A staffing policy is in place and staff give examples of how this is implemented in practice. Staffing ratios are increased if circumstances are required to meet individual young people's presenting needs. However, the home's staffing policy is not included in the Statement of Purpose, therefore interested parties are not fully informed on all operational procedures.

Effective systems are in place to monitor the care of young people and the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose. Copies of Regulation 33 visitor reports and Schedule 6 monitoring reports are held on file and made available at inspection.

The provision of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people's individuality is recognised and staff are fully committed to meeting the needs of young people and providing them with a supportive and enabling environment to help them progress and develop as individuals. Staff work hard in tailoring the work they undertake to the specific needs and capabilities of individual young people placed in their care. The home also promotes tolerance and respect to enable young people to be open and tolerant of differences.

Young people's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. Each young person has a case file and they are made aware that they may read their file, except for confidential or third party information. Files are securely stored and generally well maintained.

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
1	include in the Statement of Purpose all matters listed in	31/03/2011

	Schedule 1; in particular paragraph 19 of that schedule. (Regulation 4 (1))	
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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 the home's risk assessment of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest is regularly reviewed (NMS 18.5)
- ensure the home's risk assessment in relation to the premises is regularly reviewed (NMS 26.2)
- include the home's staffing policy in the Statement of Purpose. (NMS 30.2).