

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC034797
Inspection date	20 January 2010
Inspector	Robert Hewston
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	11 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 home is operated by a local authority children's services department. The home provides long term residential care for looked after children and young people of either gender, between the ages of 12 and 16 years. The home is a six bedroom, two-storey detached property owned by the local authority. It is located in the suburbs of a large town.

Four young people were present during the inspection, one took an active part in the inspection and another had filled in a questionnaire before the inspection.

Summary

This inspection was an unannounced full inspection visit. The outcome groups relating to Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation were assessed.

The overall quality rating is outstanding with an outstanding feature in all six outcomes. Staff work hard and have progressive relationships with the important people in the young people's lives so that they can be appropriately involved. Each young person is receiving a focused level of care and support that successfully promotes their personal, social and educational development. The Registered Manager and staff team are conscientious and committed to managing the home in a way that best suits the group of young people accommodated. Young people are able to make meaningful contributions to the running of the home because their views and opinions are valued.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection only one recommendation was set. It was to ensure that following incidents of restraint, children are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them in the records kept by the home. The improved records now allow the young people the opportunity to make comments on any physical intervention, complaints or consequences. Some young people have taken the opportunity to comment while others have not. All young people have signed the form to say they have read the document.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Meals available at the home are varied, healthy and nutritious. Consultation with young people about their meal choices is viewed as important. Young people are assured that they will have two menu choices each week. Staff are committed to ensuring young people understand the importance of a balanced diet therefore the consumption of unhealthy food is kept to a minimum. Young people look forward to having a take away meal once per week. Some young people enjoy cooking and willingly participate in the preparation of meals. Young people's awareness of diet and exercise is excellent because staff are committed to a programme of education which fits in with the home's wider approaches to promoting a healthy lifestyle.

Health care is given a high priority at the home. All young people have comprehensive health care plans that are regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure the health needs of young people are met. Staff are proactive in their attempts to enlist specialist medical professionals to fully assess the specific health requirements of young people. All young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. A record is kept of the outcomes of all medical appointments to ensure any ongoing concerns are addressed. The records demonstrate that young people's health is being monitored and promoted by the staff in the home.

Young people's health and safety is effectively promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following individual prescription instructions. Staff are able to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because they have access to first aid boxes and have been trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is also being evaluated by managers who monitor accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are assured that their privacy and confidentiality are maintained at the home. All young people have lockable bedroom doors and know staff will not enter their bedrooms without their permission. Strict guidance is in place concerning room searches and this is known and understood by young people. Privacy is available during the process of young people making and receiving telephone calls. Sensitivity is used to monitor contact arrangements where restrictions exist. All confidential records are maintained securely. There is sufficient space for young people to meet privately with visitors.

Young people are clearly benefiting from a service that has an outstanding focus on safeguarding and protection matters. Young people feel very safe in the home. Operational policies, procedures and staff guidance are used effectively to promote everybody's safety and welfare. Young people are frequently and consistently engaged by staff in how to keep themselves and others safe. Young people benefit from living in a home where there are excellent arrangements in place to ensure staff are trained and well informed about effective safeguarding practices. Young people are fully protected because staff recognise and understand their role in child protection and know what action to take if there are concerns.

Young people live in a home where bullying is not allowed and where any form of unwanted behaviour is challenged. Staff provide regular and specific feedback to young people about their behaviour with a clear focus on setting fair and reasonable boundaries. Young people understand what is expected of them and they are rewarded for good behaviour. Very few formal sanctions or physical interventions are used and the home's philosophy is carried out in practice in terms of its behaviour management policy. Staff focus on the positives, young people are given many chances to adjust and improve inappropriate behaviours, staff are patient and listen to young people. Staff demonstrate patience, they promote boundaries that are safe and in the best interests of young people. Where more formal interventions are used, such as sanctions or physical interventions, the home's records demonstrate that staff responses are proportionate. Young people's individual risk assessments highlight the methods to be used to assist a young person in calming down. Staff use their knowledge and understanding of young people's needs in this area to communicate in a way that is supportive and encouraging.

All statutory health and safety checks are carried out within the required timescales. Staff and young people know and understand fire evacuation procedures and respond to them in a timely manner. Risk assessments are available for the building and fire prevention. For example, fire prevention systems are checked and serviced regularly, well rehearsed emergency evacuation procedures are carried out and risk assessments are completed to inform the home about environmental safety issues. However the recording of fire evacuations does not clearly show which staff members and young people have taken part.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Each young person is receiving outstanding levels of support because the Registered Manager and staff team provide a service that is very flexible and responsive to individual needs. The home provides a positive culture of engagement and dialogue where young people's needs are well known and risks are managed effectively. Staff understand the importance of acknowledging young people's differences so that needs relating to areas such as ethnicity, religion, gender and disability can be identified and met. The recording of discussions does not always reflect the positive work achieved.

Young people receive excellent support from staff to help them through their education. Arrangements are well established with routines that promote consistent attendance. Education is viewed positively and staff know what they need to do for each young person to ensure the right help is provided. Excellent communication between schools' and the home enhances the consistent approach to young peoples individual needs. As a consequence of this, young people receive practical and emotional support to do well.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have a placement plan which is used alongside other information to ensure the home's staff are fully informed about individual needs. The available information is of a excellent quality and details the support required resulting from assessments of individual needs and risks. Case files contain a range of information including weekly and monthly reports that provide an overview of events, routines and how the home is supporting young people. Young people's plans include the arrangements for contact which demonstrate that they are fully supported to maintain relationships that are important to them. Young people's case records also highlight any limitations on family contact to ensure staff are informed about any agreed restrictions on these arrangements. Staff are vigilant and aware of the actual and potential risks young people can face in these circumstances.

Young people are provided with the right support when they move-in or leave the home. Staff are sensitive and aware of the need to listen to young people. Young people are given good support when they arrive and leave the home and these routines are based around individual needs and circumstances. For example, young peoples statutory reviews show how the staff are questioning and identifying potential places when the young people need to leave in a few months. This is due to concerns, shared by young people and staff, about the lack of provision for young people over eighteen years of age in the local area. Staff understand that moving home can be very difficult for some young people and this awareness is used to provide support and reassurance in these circumstances.

Staff are sensitive and aware of the need to listen to young people. This approach fits with the home's wider operation in terms of consultation and listening to young people. Excellent arrangements are in place to allow young people to express themselves in a range of different ways. The home's records show that staff respond positively, and the home's day-to-day operation is influenced by what young people have to say.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are provided with a safe and comfortable home which is domestic in style and layout. The location of the property provides young people with a degree of privacy because it is set back from the main road and has its own front and rear gardens. The accommodation is maintained to a good standard and it is kept clean and tidy. Young people are provided with individual bedrooms which are suitably maintained and personalised to their own tastes. Young people have access to sufficient levels of communal space which gives them choices regarding their recreational and leisure time. The home provides young people with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities with appropriate locks to ensure their privacy is maintained. Suitable laundry facilities are also provided to meet the needs of the home.

Young people are supported to develop their life and independent skills during their stay at the home. Staff use the home's existing domestic routines and arrangements to engage young people in areas that they need to learn about. Young people benefit from a staff approach that is practical and realistic and which incorporates learning through the day-to-day domestic circumstances of the home. The active drive, from the home, in response to young people moving onto appropriate accommodation shows the outstanding focus on safeguarding and well being for the young people.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home is effectively managed and young people are cared for by a motivated, committed and enthusiastic team of staff who understand their role and responsibilities well. The Registered Manager provides good day-to-day support to individual shifts and as a result all are well informed about daily routines, events and the progress of each young person. The commitment from staff is a strength of the home. Most staff absences are covered from within the existing team, who are already known by the young people, and this ensures their continuity of care.

Young people live in a well managed home where staff are supported to work effectively in achieving outcomes outlined in individual plans of care. Information about the home's operation is clearly reflected in the statement of purpose. The young person's guide also provides the right information in a readable format that outlines what can be expected from the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are cared for by staff who belong to a diverse care team. Staff knowledge and awareness about each young person's needs is excellent. This is because there is a comprehensive range of information available to ensure each plan of care is individualised and unique. In addition, young people are provided with a caring and supportive environment where differences are understood and where everyone is treated fairly and with equal concern.

The home has in place a good programme for staff training and continual professional development. Over 80% are trained to national vocational qualification (NVQ) level 3 and the remaining staff are completing this programme of training. Specific accredited training in types of therapy would further enhanced the excellent relationship staff have with the young people and others.

The Registered Manager has excellent systems in place to monitor the operation of the home and the overall progress of each young person. Regular visits are made to the home by organisational representatives and findings are reflected in written monitoring reports. The Registered Manager responds to these reports along with other activities relating to the evaluation of the service. Internal monitoring systems are excellent.

Young people's case files are kept securely and contain an appropriate range of information about their history and progress.

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):

- improve the recording of significant views, discussions and expressed opinions of young people, in particular of one-to-one discussions (NMS 7)
- ensure the recording of fire evacuation procedure show which staff and young people participated. (NMS 26)