

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqueline Malcolm
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	25 February 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 children's home is run by a local authority. It is registered to accommodate up to four young people aged from 11 to 17 years old, of either gender. The accommodation consists of four single bedrooms, and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing.

The home is in a residential area and is close to public transport. One of the main aims of the setting is to give young people the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Some of the young people present were consulted during the course of the visit.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection to check the homes compliance with the national minimum standards (NMS) of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic well being and organisation.

The home provides good outcomes for young people. Young people's health, welfare and safety are given priority and staff take a proactive approach to care planning and review of placements. Staff value the importance of a good education and encourage young people to attend school and college. Young people have positive relationships with staff, are regularly consulted and listened to. Staff promote young people to prepare for independence and assess their competency and skills in this area. The organisation and management of the home is good and the promotion of equality and diversity is also good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the registered person was asked, by way of good practice, to meet all young people's individual needs and continue to improve planning for leaving care. Evidence from this inspection demonstrates that improvements have been made in both areas. However, the pathway plan, needed for one young person, although close to completion has not been made available to staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged to have a healthy, balanced diet, which is regularly monitored by the manager. Staff are trained in food hygiene and young people may be involved in shopping and meal preparations. Young people have opportunities to eat foods from different countries, which forms part of their awareness about different religions and cultures. The needs of young people with specific health needs are met. They can make drinks and snacks from the kitchen. There are suitable dining facilities for young people and staff to eat together.

Young people's health and hygiene needs are promoted. They are clearly identified when young people move into the home and services are provided to meet their needs. The looked after children nurse completes health needs assessments, which ensures young people's good health. Young people are registered with the doctor, dentist and optician and specialist services are

made available for those who need it. For example, children and adolescent mental health services. Staff support young people to attend health appointments and parents can also attend. Staff encourage young people live a healthy lifestyle and partake in exercise. Young people who smoke are informed about the dangers to their health and are offered smoke cessation. Support and advice is also available to young people who need support to address drugs, alcohol and sexual health issues.

Overall, young people's health is safeguarded by the home's procedures for administering medication. Signed medical consents allow staff to administer first aid and non-prescribed medication. Older young people may also sign their own consent forms and most of the medication that young people take is to be taken as and when needed. Staff are trained in first aid and the administration of medication. Medication is securely stored in a locked cabinet. Accident records demonstrate that appropriate actions are taken.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and dignity is respected. Young people do not share rooms and they have their own keys. This ensures their privacy. Young people's individual files are numbered, which keeps their names confidential. Other information about young people is stored in a secure environment. Room searches are done in compliance with the organisations policy, although no room searches have been undertaken for some time. Young people have access to the phone and can make calls in private. They can also earn credit as an incentive to top up their mobile phones.

Young people know how to complain. Staff make them aware about the complaints procedure. Young people confirmed that they have access to the worker from the children's rights service. Young people can also express their grumbles and the acting manager responds directly to them. This helps to minimise the need for a minor situation to escalate into a formal complaint. The numbers of compliments far outweigh the complaints made. This is positive.

Young people are safeguarded by the organisations policies and procedures. All staff are trained in safeguarding and some have had refresher training and provide positive feedback about the quality of the training. Staff talk to young people about keeping safe. They also attend strategy meetings when young people are suspected to be involved in activities which place them at risk of harm. Young people are protected from bullying. Staff are alerted to the potential for bullying behaviour and this is appropriately addressed in a proactive way. Bullying behaviour is monitored and all young people are made aware that it is unacceptable. Young people who bully or are subject to this behaviour are supported by means of individual work.

Young people who are absent from the home without authority are protected by agreed protocols and individual risk assessments. Staff are aware about the potential risks to young people when they are away from the home and advise them about staying safe when leaving the home on their own. The absconding behaviour of some young people has reduced due to the level of staff interventions.

Young people's behaviour is well managed and staff promote positive relationships. Young people confirm that they like the staff and are treated fairly. Some of the young people present challenging behaviours. However, staff employ a number of strategies to counter such behaviour and are appropriately trained. This used to involve a number of sanctions and restraints.

However, more recently, positive incentive plans and the focus on building positive relationships have had a positive impact. Young people's behaviour is discussed in their own meetings and they respond well to this. Young people have behaviour management plans and staff discuss the young people in staff meetings.

Young people's health and safety is actively promoted. Regular checks on the fire systems are completed and are in order. This also includes checks on electrical equipment, gas fires, security of the building and means of escape. The home has up to date risk assessments, including in relation to young people's activities, such as smoking, sexual exploitative behaviour and stranger danger issues. Other aspects include the risk of fire, spread of infectious diseases, medication, drink and drugs and solvent abuse. These measures promote the health and safety of staff and young people. The recommendations to meet the requirements of the fire risk assessment are being addressed.

The systems for staff recruitment and ensuring up to date criminal record bureau checks are appropriate. Visitors to the home are robustly vetted. These measures safeguard young people from people who may pose a risk to them.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people's individual needs are identified and met by staff and professionals from social care, health and education services. Key workers undertake individual work with young people and along with other staff are accessible.

Staff value the importance of a good education and make every effort to motivate young people to attend school, work to attendance targets and achieve good educational outcomes. All young people attend school and college and those of school age have a personal education plan. Staff monitor school attendance when young people are missing from home. Young people have facilities to help them to study. These are positive measures that actively promote the education of young people.

Young people are encouraged to get involved in planned and individual leisure activities. Example's include

playing on the games console, football, socialising with friends, bowling and meals out, DVD nights, cinema, arts and crafts, swimming and pamper nights. Young people were involved in Halloween and bonfire night activities. Young people confirm that they have opportunities to partake in the activities they enjoy.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from good care planning and review of their care and welfare. Staff ensure that they obtain as much information about young people prior to the making of the placement. This is not always possible due to the emergency nature of some placements, however, this information is impressed upon social workers to fulfil. Planning meetings held within 72 hours of the placement clarify the plans for young people and these are recorded. However, there is no recorded decision making process that demonstrates the likely impact of a young persons admission on the existing group of young people. The admissions and discharge

information includes information to prompt staff to record young people's ethnicity and disability status.

Residential placement plans have been developed by the home. These are working documents that encourage young people to participate in their care planning. They identify how individual young people's needs will be met and they are reviewed. Statutory reviews of placements take place and young people have an opportunity to attend and express their opinions. Staff report to the review and provide an update on the progress that young people are making in placement.

Contact is encouraged and appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure safe family contacts. Young people are in contact with friends, professionals and significant others. Staff monitor young people's contacts in their different forms, for example, visits and phone contacts.

Young people are consulted. They are involved in some decisions about the running of the home. For example, they discuss, the need for them to respect each other, home improvements and leisure activities. Staff respond to the suggestions that young people make which demonstrates they are listened to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are actively encouraged to develop independence skills irrespective of their age. In-house child friendly independence plans have been formulated and they assess young people's independent skills. This is a very good document that is interesting, interactive and provides young people opportunities to get involved in their care planning and to learn more about themselves. Young people who have reached the age for more formal independence planning have a pathway plan in the process of being finalised and have been involved in the development of these.

The communal areas of the home are clean and tidy. Staff are in the process of continuing the redecoration programme and improvements have been made in the lounge and dining areas. These are homely and comfortable areas for young people, who participated in these developments. There are enough bathrooms and toilets with appropriate locks. Young people's bedrooms, hallways and stairways are in satisfactory condition and action is planned to improve these areas in consultation with the current group of young people. Young people's artwork is visible on the walls and artwork reflecting cultural difference are well presented on the walls. This is further enhanced by the presentations in the dining room in relation to valuing diversity. Information includes different faiths, holidays and religious and a cultural calendar.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The Statement of Purpose has been updated to reflect the current management arrangements. However, the details of the new responsible individual is not included. The children's guide is presented in a format that young people can understand and it is age appropriate. The contact details for Ofsted are included in this document. Young people confirm they have a copy.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is well evidenced throughout all of the outcome areas.

Young people's individual needs are met. They are encouraged to get involved in learning about cultural differences and to respect these. Their values are appropriately challenged, particularly in their use of language and bullying behaviour. The manager reviews the manner in which equality and diversity is delivered every six months. The staff team are reflective of gender, race and age.

The registered manager has retired from their post. Interim management arrangements have been in place since October this year. The acting manager is appropriately qualified and experienced to carry out their duties. Young people are cared for by a satisfactory number of competent staff who have a range of skills and experience that they bring to the team. Staffing levels have been increased during challenging periods to safeguard the welfare of young people. Two of the vacancies have also been filled. A high number of staff have attained the National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People (NVQ) at Level 3. This is good. Staff are also encouraged to attend courses to update their knowledge base. Staff are supervised and appraised and there is a probationary period for new staff to the home. Staff confirm they enjoy working with the young people.

The quality of care is monitored by the acting manager and Regulation 33 visitor. These systems provide a good overview of care practices and comment about the strengths and improvements needed. However, the actual meals eaten by young people are not commented on to show satisfaction with the delivery of healthy, balanced meals.

Young people's files are well organised, audited and reflect their progress. Young people are aware that they can read their files and are encouraged to do so.

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
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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):

- implement the fire risk assessment on completion of outstanding work (NMS 26.8)
- consider recording the needs of the child concerned, and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing group of children (NMS 5.7)
- implement the pathway plan for young people who need them (NMS 6)
- monitor the actual meals that young people eat (NMS 32)
- include the name, address and relevant qualifications and experience of the responsible individual in the Statement of Purpose. (NMS 1.2)