

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joseph Hobson
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Date of last inspection	18 January 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 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 children's home currently provides care and accommodation for up to five young people aged from 15 years old up to 18 years old.

The property is detached. Young people have individual bedrooms and share bathroom and shower facilities. The home has a lounge, dining room, quiet lounge and two kitchens. There is a separate area with laundry facilities. There are gardens to the front and rear of the home and a patio at the rear. It is situated in a large estate with good transport links into the town and to local leisure facilities.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection at which three young people were seen.

Young people live in a healthy environment and their health needs are identified and their good health is promoted. The home has good procedures for safeguarding young people, which are known to staff. Young people's welfare is actively safeguarded and they are protected from abuse by a well trained and knowledgeable staff team. The support provided to young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour is outstanding. Relationships between young people and staff are strong and mutually respectful.

Care planning arrangements are good overall; however, the preparation of young people for adulthood is outstanding. Young people are actively involved in planning all aspects of their care and consultation is good, particularly in respect of pathway planning and the day to day running of the home.

The home is well managed and support and supervision of staff is effective. The home is generally free from identifiable hazards, although fire drills have not been held within required timescales. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The electric socket identified for repair at the last inspection is now safe and in working order, meeting the action made at the last inspection. Two recommendations were made at the last visit. The complaints procedure has not been made available in formats accessible to young people who have English as a second language. Also, the home has not yet improved its system for when room searches have been conducted.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have their health needs identified and promoted well. The home maintains a good quality health plan for each young person, which is known and agreed by them. Young people are registered with a local doctor, dental and optical services. Good records are maintained of all medical interventions and young people are supported to attend medical appointments. Young people said, 'We are given advice about keeping healthy. We have balanced diets. You

can decide whether you want staff to go to appointments with you or if you want to go alone.' Annual health checks are carried out and young people can access advice and guidance for sexual health, smoking cessation, substance and alcohol misuse.

Robust systems to safely administer medication to young people are in place. There is a clear policy for managing the receipt, administration, recording and disposal of medicines. Accurate records are kept of all medicines administered to young people. Risk assessments, which are agreed and signed by young people who self medicate, ensure that their welfare is safeguarded. Medicines are safely and securely stored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have their privacy, confidentiality and dignity respected and comprehensive policies are in place regarding these matters. However, the home does not have a policy for searching young people's bedrooms. Young people have keys to their rooms and bathroom facilities have appropriate locks fitted. Young people reported, 'They (the staff) respect your privacy, they knock and don't come in your room unless you ask them,' and 'Staff never discuss other young people's business with you. I think the staff keep your information very confidential.' Each young person has a mobile telephone and the home provides regular top ups to allow them to make telephone calls in private. They can also make personal call in private on the home's landline.

There are good procedures in place to deal with complaints from young people and these procedures are known to staff. Complaints information is displayed on the young people's notice board together with contact numbers for the regulator and children's counselling charities. However, the complaints information is not available in formats accessible to young people who have English as a second language. No complaints have been received by the home since the last inspection. Comments received from young people included, 'This place is sound. I have not made any complaints,' and 'The staff listen to you and do sort most things. I know how to complain, but I do not have any.'

Comprehensive systems and policies, procedures and guidance are in place to safeguard young people's welfare. Staff are well trained in safeguarding procedures and demonstrate a sound understanding of the action required by them to keep young people safe from abuse. A young person said, 'I am safe, nothing to worry about living here. If I was not safe I would tell someone.'

Incidence of bullying at the home is very low. The home has a comprehensive countering bullying policy. Effective systems are in place to record and report incidents of bullying and/or racial harassment. Young people reported that staff do not tolerate bullying and intervene to stop it.

The home has effective procedures for reporting when young people go missing from the home. Good quality and individualised risk assessments, agreed with young people's social workers, give clarity to the circumstances when staff are required to make a notification.

The support and assistance provided to young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour is commendable. Each young person has an individual comprehensive crisis management plan, behaviour management plan and behavioural risk assessment in place. These are known to and agreed by young people. Relationships between young people and staff were observed to be

very positive and mutually respecting. Staff are trained and are skilled in dealing with challenging behaviour. A strong emphasis is placed on using strategies, such as diversion and distraction, reducing the necessity for physical intervention. There have been no incidents when physical intervention has been used or when sanctions have been applied to young people since the last inspection. Young people reported, 'There are never any sanctions given or restraints. We all get on,' and 'This is a good place to live, the staff care about young people at this home.'

Risks to young people's welfare are effectively assessed and eliminated through robust risk assessment and management planning. Regular checks are made of fire and safety equipment. Staff are trained in fire safety. However, it was found that the home has not carried out any fire drills in the six months leading up to the inspection.

Robust recruitment, selection and vetting procedures ensure that only suitable adults are employed to work at the home. A satisfactory system is in place to vet and record visitors. These measures contribute to the safeguarding of young people's welfare.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Relationships between young people and the adults who care for them are strong and the quality of support given is outstanding. Young people form meaningful and respecting relationships with all staff. Key worker arrangements are particularly effective and care planning is well co-ordinated. Young people said, 'I think we get all the support we need,' and 'I respect the staff and they respect me. We work together and they help us plan for our future.'

Support for education and training is given high priority. All young people at the home are engaged in full-time education or work placements. The home maintains good links with the Connexions service to identify and support placements. Each young person has been given a laptop computer to aid learning and develop information technology (IT) skills. Young people with English as a second language receive excellent support to learn and develop the acquisition of English through the provision of individual tutors and language IT software.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home has developed good care planning arrangements. Policies and guidance available to staff ensures that placement plans meet with the requirements of regulation. The quality of placement plans is good and young people's involvement is clearly evidenced. Young people are involved in reviewing their care arrangements, regularly attending their reviews and meetings. Comments made by young people included, 'I always attend my reviews, it is my life and I want to make the decisions. At my age you ought to,' and 'I go to my meetings and let people know what I want to happen in my life, it is important.' Reviews are held within timescales.

Contact arrangements, including restrictions, are clearly recorded on young people's files. Young people are able to visit family and friends and receive visitors at the home. One young person said, 'You can visit your family or they can come here. I have loads of friends and see them regularly.' The home maintains a record of all contact between young people and their families.

There are sound arrangements, supported by good quality policies in respect of the admission and discharge of young people to the home. Young people are able to visit and stay overnight as part of their introduction. Planning meeting arrangements ensures that the home is able to meet the needs of the young people it admits.

The home has good arrangements for consulting with young people. Regular meetings are held with young people to gauge their views on the running of the home. Young people said, 'We are consulted all of the time about what we want. We are all on independence plans so we decide what we want to eat, where we want to go, what we want to do,' and 'You choose your bedroom, furniture, all that kind of stuff. Any activities we do are agreed with us. This is quite different from most children's homes as we are older and more independent.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

The quality and level of support to enable young people to acquire independent living skills in preparation for adulthood are outstanding. Young people have comprehensive independent living placement plans, which are known to and agreed by young people. These plans are reviewed regularly by key workers in consultation with young people. Close links are maintained with the local authority pathway team and Connexions service to identify and support education and work placements. Young people plan, shop and cook for all meals. They are responsible for laundering their own clothes, keeping their rooms tidy, and travelling to and from their education and work placements. The home provides outreach to young people who have moved into the community, maintaining close links and providing practical support and advice. Young people reported, 'This home is set up to help us learn about becoming independent. We get help and training with budgeting, shopping and planning meals, doing laundry and loads of stuff like that,' and 'They will help you to complete forms and attend appointments for college or jobs, but we are mostly helped to do things for ourselves. You have a big programme to follow to make sure you can manage when you leave.'

The home provides good quality accommodation, which is homely in style. It is indistinguishable from neighbouring properties and meets the needs of the young people resident. There are sufficient numbers of bathroom and toilet facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose and young people's guide meet with the requirements of regulation. However, the young people's guide is not in a format accessible to young people with English as a second language.

Staff are supported through effective supervision arrangements and have access to good quality policies, guidance and procedures. Monthly supervision is provided to all staff, with newer staff receiving this more frequently. Staff reported that they are supported well by managers. Young people are cared for by a well trained, competent, experienced and qualified staff team. 90% of staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People, exceeding the standard. Training is given a high priority and staff said that the quality of training is good and equips them well to deliver good quality care and services to the young people in their care. The home is staffed at all times at levels to meet the needs of the young people resident. Staff turnover is minimal providing consistency of care.

There are effective arrangements to monitor the functioning of the home by the registered provider. Unannounced visits are made and a report is provided to the home and the regulator, which includes all the matters required by regulation. The home's management has in place a satisfactory system to monitor the quality of care. Both monitoring arrangements include consultation with young people.

Young people's records are maintained confidentially and securely. The home maintains the required information and records about young people in accordance with regulation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The home provides high quality residential provision, which values young people's diversity and promotes equality. The support provided to young people with English as a second language is particularly good. Young people's respect for others from different cultures and ethnic backgrounds is strong. There are comprehensive policies for promoting equality and diversity and a good quality community cohesion impact assessment is in place. This includes an equality framework action plan, which identifies issues and provides strategies to improve services for users and inclusion. Some documentation is not in a format accessible to young people with English as a second language, although the home has made provision for interpreters to explain the contents of these documents.

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
26	ensure by the means of fire drills and practises at suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and the young people accommodated are aware of the procedures to be followed in case of fire. (Regulation 32)	12 June 2010

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 complaints procedure is available in formats accessible to young people who have English as a second language (NMS 16.3)
- improve the home's system for when room searches have been conducted, particularly develop a policy and a system to record when searches to bedrooms are made (NMS 9.8)
- ensure that the young people's guide is available in formats accessible to young people with English as a second language. (NMS 1.3)