

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sarah Urding
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Date of last inspection	20 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 children's home is council run. It is currently provides care and accommodation for up to five children, boys or girls, 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 full inspection. All key standards were inspected.

This is a good service with outstanding features. Young people's good health is promoted because staff work well with health professionals and promote healthy lifestyles in line with individual needs. Young people are safeguarded because staff care about them and empower them to make safe choices. Young people's life chances are raised because staff are proactive about securing further learning opportunities and there is a strong focus on preparing young people for adulthood. Staff continue to provide excellent levels of support when young people leave the home. Staff actively encourage young people to maintain positive relationships with families and value social and cultural networks. Young people and staff share positive, relaxed relationships. The staff team are experienced, communicate effectively and value the views of young people. Shortfalls relate to a security issue which was highlighted during the inspection. Areas for further development relate to the need for clarity in the recording of individual needs and the provision of training for staff to help them understand the impact of the experiences faced by unaccompanied asylum seekers.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Staff have made good progress in meeting the shortfalls at the last inspection and in improving outcomes for young people. The statement of purpose is now clear and provides useful information as to service expectation. A system for raising the quality of care from within now clearly links to the home's development plan. This provides a clear focus for staff. Staff are now notifying Ofsted appropriately of significant events and demonstrate that challenging or concerning incidents are safely managed. Clear risk assessments relating to bullying and the self management of medication demonstrates that sound consideration is given to the management of risk. This safeguards young people. Training for staff in National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People does not yet meet the standard. However, 75 per cent of staff now have this qualification and the remainder of staff are near to completion. There is a commitment to ongoing training in the staff team, which equips them to undertake their roles.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Staff follow the latest good practice guidelines in relation to health care in the home. They work with a range of health professionals, such as psychological support services and the looked after children's nurse to ensure that young people's good health is promoted. Arising health issues are well managed and staff advocate strongly on behalf of young people to ensure that they receive the health care services they need. This includes the use of an interpreter, so that young people are empowered to be in control of their own health care. This is excellent practice.

Young people are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles by going to the gym and eating healthily. Excellent attention is given to ensure that young people's religious and cultural needs are met. Mealtimes are social occasions and young people are encouraged to cook and eat together. They are supported well by staff in their independence and learn from each other. Positive work has been undertaken to encourage understanding of other cultures through the medium of food. Staff provide healthy, well balanced meals for those young people not involved in independence programmes.

Medication is safely managed. The young people are of an age where they are encouraged to administer their own medication. A positive piece of work has been undertaken with young people to ensure that they understand how to do this safely. Medication is safely stored and clear, accountable records are kept of medication in the home. This promotes young people's good health and encourages their independence.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are safely looked after by staff who show respect and share very positive relationships with them. This promotes well-being and trust. Young people are confident to express their views and concerns because staff listen well and take action when concerns are raised. There have been no complaints made by young people because staff are proactive in this regard.

The arrangements for child protection and unauthorised absences are safely managed. Staff receive ongoing safeguarding training to keep them up to date with current best practice. Potential safeguarding issues are highlighted and discussed in multi-agency arenas and safe strategies are implemented. Staff are vigilant and ensure that contact is maintained with young people when they leave the home without permission. This encourages a safe return home.

Challenging behaviour is managed safely because staff are well trained and respect young people's privacy and personal space. Staff follow clear guidelines and manage incidents in a fair, consistent and measured way. There have been no restraints for a considerable period of time and sanctions for poor behaviour are infrequent. A reward system is in place within the home, which encourages positive behaviour. Clear assessments are in place that inform staff well how to manage risky behaviours. Arrangements are in place for the safe management of bullying. There are no issues in the home at the present time because staff are working positively with young people to develop respect, understanding and tolerance of others.

Safe systems are in place and implemented for the management of health, safety and risk of fire. However, the inspector was able to access the home without staff knowledge, which presents a risk to security.

The home operates a safer recruitment policy and implements this in practice, which reduces the risk to young people of being exposed to potential abusers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide exceptional levels of individual support to young people. Staff are proactive in seeking young people's views and know the young people they care for well. Young people actively contribute to defining their needs and staff are well equipped to recognise unmet needs. Young people are supported by key workers and can choose who they wish to support them. Interpreters meet regularly with young people whose first language is not English to assist them in this process. Staff are sensitive to the fact that young people need to have confidence in their interpreter's ability to communicate their wishes, to seek their views and to provide alternative interpreters where necessary.

Staff work well with other professionals to further their understanding of young people's needs and ensure that young people have access to external support services. For example, counselling, drug and alcohol advisory services and sexual health services. Staff work at the pace of young people, which encourages timely intervention. Staff counter isolation by being proactive in securing social and cultural networks for young people and there is positive integration in the home.

Young people are of an age where they have left school. However, staff promote their continued learning by encouraging attendance at college and help young people access the courses they need to improve life chances. This support extends beyond young people's time in the home, which is excellent practice.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are held in high regard and actively contribute to their lives and the running of the home from the outset. There are a variety of forums for young people to make their views known and their opinions are sought as to how service delivery can improve. Young people are confident that they can affect change because of this, which raises self esteem.

There is a child-centred admissions process, which ensures that young people know about the home and involves staff working with them prior to coming to ensure a smooth transition. This reduces the risk of a placement breaking down. Similarly, when young people leave the home, staff are committed and have an excellent track record of offering continued support throughout early adulthood. These transitions are well planned and managed.

There are some inconsistencies with regards the content of placement plans. Most, clearly identify young people's needs and inform staff well how to meet them. However, one placement plan does not reflect the team's understanding and provision of support well. This is a recording issue rather than a practice issue but does not encourage consistent working where this is the case and may result in needs being missed. All placement plans are reviewed in a timely fashion with young people, which ensures that arising needs are identified promptly.

Staff recognise the value for young people of maintaining positive contact with family and friends and the team promotes this well. Some particularly positive work has been undertaken to promote identity and to create social networks of support for young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Staff prepare young people well for their transition to adulthood. Clear and individual independence plans are in place defining young people's needs that reflect pathway plans. The home is very well managed in this regard with excellent facilities to enhance this process. There are well established partnerships in place with the pathway team and a clear focus about the learning needed to ensure that young people are equipped for independent living. This extends beyond placement, where there are very good outreach systems in place to ensure continued support. This enhances young people's life chances.

Young people take pride in their surroundings and live in a homely, well decorated and comfortable environment. There are good facilities and clear plans in place to make further improvements. Young people actively contribute to how the home is decorated and furnished.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good with some outstanding practice. Young people contribute well to their care. Staff value differences and are positive role models. Respect for others is facilitated well by encouraging learning of other cultures and there is positive integration. Staff ensure that young people develop support networks in line with their needs. Young people's individual needs are well met, although not clearly recorded in all cases.

There is a clear statement of purpose in place, which informs people well of the services they can expect to receive. The young people's guide is child-centred in format and interpreters and children's rights workers work with young people, to ensure they understand their rights and how the home is run. This equips them well to make a positive contribution.

The home is well staffed and staff are supported well to undertake their roles. Staff are experienced, communicate well and are committed to achieving positive outcomes for young people. Staff receive ongoing training to meet the needs of young people resident. However, they have not yet received training to help them understand the impact of the experiences of unaccompanied asylum seekers.

A good system is in place to ensure that the quality of care is monitored and reviewed regularly. This links clearly to the development plan for the home and provides a focus for improving service delivery for staff and young people.

Record keeping is accountable and daily diaries provide clear accounts of young people's lives in the home. However, there are inconsistencies with regards the detail of placement plans, which although not compromising service delivery at this time, increases the risk of needs being overlooked or inconsistently met.

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 all parts of the home are secure from unauthorised access (Regulation 31 (2)(b))	27 August 2009
35	ensure records specified in Schedule 3 are kept up to date, in particular placement plans (Regulation 28(1)(b)).	27 August 2009

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- qualify 80 per cent of staff to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29.5)
- ensure staff are equipped with the skills required to meet the needs of children in the home, in particular train staff to understand the impact of the experiences of young people accommodated (NMS 31.1).