

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC035154
Inspection date	12 January 2010
Inspector	Joseph Hobson
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	8 July 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 registered to provide care and accommodation for up to six young people aged between 12 and 17 years old.

The house is detached and is situated in a residential area on the outskirts of a town. It is within easy reach of schools, shopping and leisure facilities. There are two communal lounges, a dining room and large kitchen on the ground floor. Young people have individual bedrooms and share bathrooms. There are separate staff bedrooms and bathroom facilities. The house has an enclosed garden to the rear and a smaller garden to the front.

Summary

This unannounced inspection was carried out in one day. The focus of the inspection was the assessment of the staying safe key standards and the improvements made since the last inspection. The inspection found that young people are protected from abuse by a well trained staff team who have a sound understanding of the action to take to safeguard welfare. Improvements, however, are needed to the home's systems to ensure that the regulator is notified about all serious incidents at the home.

Young people receive very good support to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff are skilled in the use of distraction and diffusion techniques which negates the need for physical intervention. Young people know how to make a complaint and their privacy is safeguarded overall. However, the home does not have a policy or system to record searches of young people's rooms.

The home has taken action to meet two of the four recommendations made at the last inspection. Two recommendations are still not met. Overall, the quality of the provision to keep young people safe is good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Four recommendations were made at the last inspection. The home has developed its own pathway planning arrangements, which are comprehensive and meet the recommendation made at the last inspection. The home has also removed the physical restrictions to the use of the kitchen and chill out room.

The young people's guide is still not in a form appropriate to the understanding of all young people at the home. Given that the home caters for a number of young people with English as a second language, the recommendation made at the last inspection still needs to be met.

Currently 62% of staff hold the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the caring for children and young people. This does not meet the recommendation that a minimum of 80% of staff hold this qualification. Therefore, this recommendation is still outstanding.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people said that their privacy is respected and staff keep information about them confidential. Bathrooms are fitted with suitable locks and young people are issued with a key to their bedroom. Young people's files are maintained securely and staff are careful not to be overheard when discussing personal information about them. The home does not have a policy or recording system for when young people's rooms are searched. This does not safeguard young people's privacy in such situations.

The home has good systems in place to deal with complaints made by young people. There have been no formal complaints made since the last inspection. Staff deal effectively with young people's concerns, reducing the need for complaints to be dealt with through the local authority procedures. Information about how to complain is displayed on the young people's notice board and is also contained within the young people's guide. The children's rights service regularly visit the home to meet with young people and see if they have any concerns. Young people said that staff listen to their concerns and deal with their complaints.

Young people said that they 'felt safe' living at the home and are given guidance and advice to help them stay safe. Staff have access to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures, which are comprehensive. Staff have been trained in child protection and demonstrated a sound understanding of the procedures and the action needed to protect young people from abuse. Policies, procedures and guidance, which contribute towards safeguarding young people's welfare, are in place. These include policies for maintaining appropriate relationships with young people, physical contact, supporting young people who self harm, and staff whistle blowing procedures.

The home is effective at protecting young people from bullying. Young people reported that incidence of bullying at the home is very low and that staff take effective action to deal with their concerns. Staff have access to a good anti-bullying policy and systems to record and monitor bullying are in place.

The home has good procedures for when young people are absent without authority. Young people are debriefed upon return and information gained is recorded for future reference. The home has risk assessments which cover potential risks to individual young people when they are absent without authority. These are used to inform staff decision making as to when to report young people as missing.

There is a system to make notifications under the regulations of any significant events which occur at the home. However, it was found that the home did not make a notification to the regulator following a major incident which necessitated the police being called to the home.

Work undertaken by the home to support young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour is commendable. Each young person has a comprehensive and individualised behaviour plan and risk assessment, which record the most effective strategies to deal with incidence of anti-social behaviour. Policies and guidance for managing behaviour and dealing with incidence of physical intervention are comprehensive. The home places a strong emphasis on rewarding positive behaviour and an incentive scheme to reward good behaviour is in place. Staff are well trained in crisis intervention and are skilled in the use of diffusion and distraction techniques.

The success of these approaches is borne out by the fact that there has not been a physical restraint at the home since 2007. There are good systems to record all incidence of restraint and sanctions in accordance with regulation. Sanctioning of young people is used sparingly and the home's management monitor the effectiveness of all sanctions imposed on young people.

Systems to assess and manage risks to young people are effective. The home has comprehensive environmental and activity risk assessments and management plans in place. Regular maintenance of fire, safety, gas appliances, and electrical equipment ensures that young people's welfare is safeguarded.

The home has robust procedures for the recruitment, selection and vetting of staff. These procedures ensure that only staff who are suitable to work with young people are employed at the home. There are satisfactory arrangements in place to vet and record all visitors to the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
20	notify without delay the relevant persons or agencies of the matters set out in Schedule 5. (Regulation 30)	20 February 2010

Recommendations

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

- improve the home's policy and systems for recording when it has been necessary to search a young person's bedroom (NMS 9.8)
- qualify 80% of staff to NVQ level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29.5)
- ensure the children's guide is in forms appropriate to the understanding of the children in the home. (NMS 1.3)