

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
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Date of last inspection	9 November 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 offers short-break care and accommodation for up to six young people of either sex aged 12 years to 17 years.

The home is situated in a village community and is within walking distance of local facilities.

The ground floor is made up of a lounge with a large screen satellite television, a dining room, a young people's room with a computer and educational facilities, a kitchen and a young person's bedroom with an en-suite bathroom. The first floor has bedrooms and bathroom facilities. There is an enclosed garden to the rear where the young people grow their own vegetables. The home is modernised and provide the young people with a clean very well furnished place to stay.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. The young people are very well cared for by staff who demonstrate a professional approach to their work.

Strong links have been established with external agencies to promote the health and education of the young people during their stay at the home. This is enhanced through the support provided for young people to lead healthy lifestyles and to achieve their potential through education.

Staff work seamlessly as a team to ensure that safeguarding of the young people is at the forefront of the activity at the home. There are excellent relationships established with young people and staff work positively with them to achieve and improve outcomes for them.

This is a service that values the contribution that young people can make to the life of the home. It is a very well managed service with strong leadership from the management team.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager was asked to ensure that staff receive fire safety training and to improve the information contained in placement plans. The manager has taken appropriate steps to ensure all staff have been trained in fire safety procedures. Placement plans have been improved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

There is a positive emphasis on healthy eating and staff are aware of what makes up a good balanced diet. Young people are encouraged to take part in food shopping trips as part of life skills learning. The young people grow their own vegetables in the garden and these are served up at meal times. This is commendable. Staff are aware which of the young people are on special diets. Staff have completed food hygiene training. Menu planning is good, and the young people are involved in planning the weekly menu. Young people commented that 'the food

here is great' and confirmed that choices are available 'we can have something different if we don't like what's on offer.'

Individual health needs are clearly identified in their case files. This information is recorded for each young person detailing how their specific and general health issue are to be addressed. Where specialist medical resources are required, staff ensure that the appropriate health professionals are notified. There are excellent professional links established with various health service providers. These include the looked after nurse, drugs service, child adolescent mental health service (CAMHS) and clinical psychologist. The managers at the home attend key health service meetings. This has been very beneficial in the development of the strong links that have been established. This is excellent practice. Although the young people only attend the home for short periods, it is clearly evident that the holistic health needs of the young people are very well met. Staff encourage and support the young people to take an interest in looking after their health. Each young person has been issued with an access card to enable them to use council -operated leisure facilities.

The home has a medicines policy, procedure and practice guidance which all staff have access to. Staff are trained in medicines administration and they are supported to complete National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in medicines administration. This is excellent practice. Medications are safely stored and administered to protect young people from harm. Clear records are kept on all medication brought into the home and a well established stock control and disposal system is in place. All staff are trained in first aid and in dealing with minor accidents and illnesses. The young people's health needs are very well met and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Staff are sensitive to the right of the young people to their privacy. Young people have access to their own bedrooms where they can be alone. There is an efficient administration system in operation and all records are stored in secure conditions.

There is a complaints procedure in place and the young people are confident about raising any concerns with staff. Young people are aware of how to make a formal complaint and they are able to initiate a complaint in confidence using the on line system. The young people's information booklet has clear guidance on how to make a complaint in user-friendly language. When a complaint is made by a young person, whether formal or informal, an independent advocacy service is contacted every time. This is excellent practice and promotes the safety of the young people.

Safeguarding is at the forefront of the practice at the home. Staff are well trained in child protection awareness and they are required to undergo regular updates using the council online computer training system. Managers routinely monitor staff safeguarding training through the computer system in operation. There are effective systems to support staff in their work to ensure the protection of the children. The manager has developed a comprehensive information resource pack containing safeguarding information that is available for staff reference. In addition, safeguarding is a standard agenda item at each staff meeting. The manager has established a learning culture at the home whereby information from national safeguarding events or enquiries is evaluated at meetings. This is very good practice.

One young person said they 'feel safe in the home' and confirmed that bullying is dealt with by staff. There is excellent information available for staff on the management of bullying situations. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out for those young people who are identified as bullies. The restorative justice method is used at the home whereby the perpetrator is faced with the consequences of their actions. This is the preferred method rather than resorting to sanctions. Staff have a good understanding of bullying and they work proactively with the young people concerned to bring about a positive outcome for all parties. The home has achieved a nationally recognised accreditation for developing anti-bullying strategies and for the production of a manual on managing bullying situations. This process actively involved the young people and clearly demonstrates a positive approach to keep young people safe.

There are procedures in place if a young person goes missing without consent. However, the incidents of young people who absent themselves from the home without authority are few. In situations where a young person was missing, an independent advocate would be contacted to meet with them to discuss the reasons for their absence. This is to ensure support for the young person and to promote their safety.

Staff base their work with the young people on the development of trust and respect. In situations where tensions or difficult behaviour are evident, staff work to de-escalate the problem. There is a positive emphasis at the home on maintaining a friendly environment. Therefore, although all staff are trained in restraint techniques, it is rarely used and this is confirmed by the young people. Staff are required to undergo restraint refresher training annually. The use of restraint and sanctions are appropriately recorded. The young people feel that staff are fair and said 'only those who are out of order would be restrained.'

The physical safety of the young people is a high priority and effective systems are in place to manage health and safety. Fire evacuation drills are carried out in line with requirements and all appliances have been properly checked by the appropriate contractors. The home has good quality doors and locks to prevent unauthorised entry and all windows have restrictors.

A strong feature at the home is the thorough robust staff selection and recruitment system in operation. All applicants for work are required to be assessed as suitable. This involves using a series of tests and evaluative systems that are designed to ensure that applicants are appropriately qualified and suited for residential care work. The young people are actively involved in this process and their views are an integral part of the final decisions on who to appoint. This is an excellent example of equality and diversity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The support given to the young is excellent. They each have a key worker allocated who is responsible for ensuring that all aspects of care and support is provided. Staff spend quality time with the young people to support them with their plan and to achieve positive outcomes from their stay at the home. The individual situation of the young people is closely monitored by staff in order to determine if extra support or resources are required. The home has established very positive links with the various health care services including direct access to a clinical psychologist. These relationships have been developed by the manager to ensure that young people can access appropriate resources. This is excellent practice and demonstrates a positive approach to equality and diversity. Young people are actively encouraged to enjoy

their stay and to participate in activities that increase their self confidence. The strong support given to the young people positively promotes their care and well-being.

There are effective links with the local schools attended by the young people. Education is strongly supported and staff said, 'education is essential if young people are to have a chance to succeed.' The manager maintains regular contact with schools to ensure regular dialogue. Where required the home will negotiate with head teachers or governors when difficult situations are evident. This is always carried out with the agreement of parents. Staff will spend time in school supporting a young person in order to maintain the school place. This means that their education is promoted even though this is a cost to the home in terms of staff time. The manager stated that 'staff will go the extra mile to support a school place rather than risk exclusion.' This is excellent practice. There are very good facilities at the home to support the young person including a computer and a well stocked library.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The placement plans for each young person details how their needs are to be met by the home. Information in case files provide staff with a full background assessment of the young person. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that the plan is monitored and updated. Staff have a clear insight into the care needs of each of the young people including an awareness of cultural and diversity considerations. This ensures that the young people are supported at the home to achieve outcomes from the care plan.

Statutory reviews are chaired by an independent reviewing officer. The young people are encouraged to participate in their reviews and to make a written contribution prior to the meeting. They are positively supported by their key workers to prepare for the review. This demonstrates a proactive approach to involving young people when important decisions are made about them.

Although the young people stay at the home for short periods, they are encouraged to maintain contact with their families. A telephone is available in private for their use.

There is a careful and well planned admissions procedure that ensures the young person and their family are consulted at all stages of the admission process. This is carried out at a pace to meet the needs of the young person. A manager will carry out an assessment visit to the young person's home to explain about what services they can expect. When a young person initially takes up a place, they are given a welcome box containing a variety of information and a gift. A similar proactive approach is taken when a young person is to leave their placement at the home.

There is a culture prevailing which encourages the young people to take an active part in the life of the home. Young people meet with staff to plan activities and to discuss issues that affect everyone at the home. They feel positive about being listened to. If young people want to raise an issue individually, they can speak to any member of staff in private. This is very good practice and ensures that young people feel confident that they are able to have their views heard.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Staff provide positive support for any young person leaving care or moving onto another placement. The young people learn skills through taking part in the daily tasks at the home, such as shopping for food, domestic skills, use of washing machine, keeping their bedroom tidy and learning about how to budget. Staff work with other professionals to ensure that a plan is developed with the young person, identifying what skills and support will be required.

The home is very well maintained having been completely refurbished and decorated. The quality of furnishings is excellent and young people enjoy having individual bedrooms. The bathroom and toilet facilities are situated close to the upstairs bedrooms. These are clean and well maintained. On the ground floor the large lounge is comfortably furnished with good quality seating and a modern plasma screen television. This room provides the young people with a very comfortable room to relax and socialise. The downstairs bedroom has en-suite facilities. A good size dining room provides the staff and young people with good quality furniture where they can enjoy meals. The kitchen is equipped with modern cooking facilities.

A positive feature of the home is a dedicated room for education purposes. This room has a computer, desk and chair. There is a well stocked library. These facilities positively encourage and support the young people to enjoy their stay and to achieve their educational potential.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The staff at this home work actively to enhance the potential of young people through positive support and encouragement, thereby, enabling them to overcome the limitations of their social backgrounds. Staff demonstrate an excellent awareness and insight into equality and diversity. This is clearly evident through their work with the young people and ensuring that they are able to participate fully in the life of the home. Cultural and religious requirements would be met and the wishes of parents are taken into account. Staff encourage the young people to achieve positive outcomes during their stay and to improve their self confidence. The young people take part in activities that include camping, scuba diving, horse riding, swimming and trips out to places of interest. The young people celebrate some religious festivals through themed meals representing these cultures. A strong feature at this home is the extensive consultation with young people concerning a wide range of issues. Irrespective of their backgrounds, young people are treated with respect and encouraged to achieve their potential.

The home's Statement of Purpose, gives a clear indication of what the young people and their parents can expect from the home. This statement gives an insight into the purpose of the home and identifies the skills and experience of the staff. It reflects the clear commitment to equality and diversity.

The staff work effectively as a team and through regular training they have developed the skills and competences to work with children who have complex emotional and behavioural needs. The staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for Children and Young People. The required standard that at least 80% of staff must have achieved this qualification has been exceeded. The managers are qualified to NVQ at level 4 in Management. This is a team of staff who are clearly enthusiastic about their work with the young people. This means that young people are cared for by qualified experienced staff.

The staffing at the home is appropriate to ensure that young people are well cared for and to maintain operating efficiency and safety for staff and young people. The management provide effective leadership, support and supervision for the staff. They share a common approach ensuring the focus is on outcomes for children. This is clearly demonstrated in the reports prepared by staff. There is an effective monitoring system in place to enable the manager to assess the quality of information in key records concerning the young people. This is enhanced by the monthly external visits from a senior manager not employed at the home.

This home is very well managed and staff demonstrate a passion for their work on behalf of the young people.

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

There are no recommendations.