

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Mark Kersh
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Date of last inspection	05/10/2009
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 owned and managed by a Metropolitan Borough Council. The property is a Victorian building, which stands in its own grounds. It is situated close to the town centre, schools, and other community facilities.

The home can accommodate six young people and has been set up specifically to provide care to young people with a range of needs. It is anticipated that the young people will live at the home on a medium to long-term basis.

The home provides single room accommodation, food, clothing, care, activities, and access to education support services.

Four young people currently live in this home of which two were present during this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service in most respects with some outstanding features under the outcome areas of enjoying and achieving and positive contribution.

Medical health needs of young people are managed well and young people are safeguarded through competent and well trained staff. Education and training opportunities along with individual support to young people are excellent. The home works closely with outside agencies in order to meet the full range of young people's needs. Care planning documentation is detailed and young people are consulted and their views listened to.

There is good provision for young people to be helped with the necessary skills to become independent on leaving the home. Behaviour is managed well and the records for sanctions mostly comply with national minimum standards. The home has had an acting manager for some considerable time, however, there has been no application made to Ofsted to appoint a Registered Manager.

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection the manager was asked to ensure improvements are made in carrying out fire drills and checking the emergency lighting system. These arrangements ensure all reasonable steps are taken to ensure young people,

staff and visitors are safe from risk from fire. The home has complied with the recommendation from the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The approach to promoting a healthy lifestyle is integrated into the running of the home. Staff provide good advice on diet and nutrition and young people are actively involved in physical activities through gym membership. Staff encourage young people to take an interest in looking after their health. They ensure young people have access to information and services to educate them in relation to a range of health and social issues. Young people are at an age where they are commencing independence living skills to prepare them for when they move on from the home. This includes planning menus, purchasing food, preparing and cooking meals, within a set weekly budget. Young people experience foods from other cultures, both at home and within the wider community at a variety of different restaurants.

The home actively promotes young people's health and emotional well-being. Individual health needs assessments are part of any admission into the home. Young people's general and specific health needs are clearly identified in comprehensive individual health plans. Staff maintain good links with specialist health and advisory services, such as drug liaison workers and the looked after children's nurse. Young people are routinely registered with local health services and staff support them to attend appointments.

Staff ensure young people are protected by maintaining detailed and clear medication procedures, which are effectively put into practice. All medication is securely stored and records of any medication taken by young people are up to date and accurately kept. Staff make sure young people only have medication specifically prescribed for them and take it in line with the prescription instructions. Staff are trained in managing medication and first aid and this ensures their welfare is further safeguarded.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are suitable arrangements in the home for promoting privacy and confidentiality. All written information in respect of young people and staff is stored securely for this purpose. Young people have their own bedrooms and keys which can be locked from the inside and their personal possessions can be securely stored. The home affords sufficient space should young people choose to have some quiet time and privacy, and young people can make and receive telephone calls in private.

Young people confirm that staff listen to them and act promptly to resolve any concerns they may have about the home. Clear information is given to young people advising them what they should do if they have a complaint about the care they

receive in the home. There is a grumble box for young people to raise issues and these are promptly addressed by staff. Policies and procedures are in place to ensure a response to any complaint raised is managed within a set timeframe. There have been no complaints made for some considerable time.

Staff take all reasonable steps to keep young people safe from harm. They work closely with agencies charged with protecting young people and are aware of what action to take in the event of any allegation or child protection concern. Staff are up to date with relevant safeguarding training to help them in their work to protect and promote the welfare of young people. Bullying is not an issue and staffing levels provide young people with supervision appropriate to their individual needs. This minimises the risk of young people bullying others or being bullied themselves.

When young people are absent from the home without authority staff know what to do and follow agreed procedures. There is regular monitoring and information sharing with other agencies to implement strategies to ensure young people return to the home safely. Staff maintain contact with those young people who fail to return to the home to ensure when they are out in the community they remain safe. Should any significant events occur, staff know the procedure to follow to ensure appropriate agencies are informed. This further protects young people.

Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour through incentives set by staff and agreed by them. These are incorporated within young people's plans. Young people know their goals for achieving recognition and rewards. Records show that no restraints have occurred in the home. Sanctions imposed for inappropriate behaviour are fair. However, when sanctions are imposed young people's views are not consistently recorded within the records kept by the home. All staff are trained in behaviour management and safe restraint techniques.

All reasonable steps are taken to ensure young people, staff and visitors are safe from risk from fire. On arrival visitors are advised if there are to be any fire drills and shown the assembly point. Regular testing and recording takes place of the home's alarm system, fire prevention equipment, emergency lighting and safe means of escape. Young people and staff take part in regular fire evacuation practises, some of which take place at night. All staff have completed fire awareness training and are delegated responsibilities for health and safety matters within the home.

Personnel records for staff are kept securely for confidentiality reasons and contain copies of relevant checks. These ensure staff, including agency staff, are safe to work with young people. Effective recruitment procedures are in place, which include rechecking existing staff.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive exceptional support and guidance when they need it. Young people say they have regular key worker sessions and records from these

demonstrated a very good focus on how young people reflected on and viewed their experience at the home. Staff see young people in a very positive light and are committed to helping them when they are anxious or upset. There are excellent links maintained with the children's rights service and young people know how to access this service should they feel the need to. Young people's specific anxieties identified by staff are supported by external professions, for example, counselling and psychology services.

All young people are currently above school age. Some are undertaking further education at local colleges and others are involved in life skills training. Staff work closely with educational and training facilities to secure the placement of young people, this significantly enhances young people's experiences in preparation for adulthood.

Staff are highly motivated and encourage young people to develop their social skills and confidence by actively supporting them to take part in leisure activities at the home and in the wider community. Young people enjoy holidays with staff and are able to pursue their individual interests and hobbies, and participate in group activities. There are sufficient funds allocated to the home for leisure and holidays.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Outstanding assessment of need and placement planning guides staff to provide high quality care to young people. Individually tailored care packages ensure that every aspect of young people's development is assessed and regularly reviewed. Daily achievable targets are set for individual young people in line with Every Child Matters outcome areas. These targets are regularly evaluated for success. Cultural, religious and racial needs are identified and supported and are reflected within young people's placement plans. Young people are encouraged to participate in statutory reviews or to contribute their views if they are unable to attend. Key workers act as advocates on behalf of young people to ensure their views are represented or to assist them to express themselves.

Young people meet regularly with each other and staff to share views and influence decisions in the way the home is run. Young people have excellent opportunities to comment on all aspects of life at the home and how they feel they are being cared for. Consultation documents and questionnaires are routinely completed by young people and evaluated by staff. There is clear evidence within the home of changes being made as a result of consulting with young people.

Young people know their arrangements for contact and these are clearly documented. Staff promote contact for young people extremely well and mostly welcome people to the home. Some friends of young people who are assessed as posing a risk may be asked to wait outside for safety reasons. There is sufficient space to ensure contact can be conducted in private.

The management team considers carefully the needs of any prospective admission and whether young people's needs can be met alongside those of young people already placed. Mostly pre-placement visits take place and individual tailored packages about the home are prepared. Where emergency placements are made, planning meetings are promptly arranged to identify the needs of young people and to make arrangements of how these needs can be best met.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home has introduced a good preparation for independence programme that is tailored to meet the individual needs and level of development of young people. It focuses on helping young people to build up the skills they need to be as independent as possible in the future. There are comprehensive plans in place which are monitored and evaluated, for achievement or identify further support. The programme has recently been introduced and so evidence of its success is limited.

The home is situated in a local community with easy access to community facilities, transport networks and schools. Parking is available within the grounds of the home.

The home provides spacious accommodation for communal use including a range of additional facilities in the annexe. This includes an arts and crafts room, beauty and massage room, computer room, and an additional kitchen and lounges for contact and meetings. The bathrooms are clean and tidy and hot water is regulated at a safe temperature. The home is well maintained, well furnished and decorated to a good standard. There is one outstanding repair, to replace a broken window. This has been reported to the local authority works department.

Young people have their own bedroom, which is decorated and furnished including a wash hand basin for additional privacy, a desk and television. Young people confirm they can personalise their bedroom and that the home is warm and provides them with safety.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive the same opportunities and equal treatment within the home, without favouritism or prejudice. Young people are valued and accepted for their differences and staff encourage young people to value themselves and others. Young people are made aware of the celebrations and festivities of their own and other communities.

The Statement of Purpose relates to the functions and practice within this home and is available to staff, parents and placing authorities. Young people are given a welcome pack which includes information about the home and clearly sets out what they can expect. Both of these documents are up to date and available within the

home.

All staff are provided with good training opportunities and are encouraged and enabled to reflect on their practice, through regular supervision and annual appraisals. Young people benefit from a staff group who are qualified, experienced and well motivated. There have been occasions following the previous inspection where staffing levels have been disrupted and agency staff used, this at times has prevented continuity for young people, and they have made their views known to staff. However, current staffing levels are good and allow staff to work intensively with young people.

Monitoring of the home is undertaken on a monthly basis by a representative of the local authority in which the views of young people and staff are ascertained. Detailed reports follow such visits and identify key areas where action needs to be taken by the manager. The home's administration systems are checked monthly to ensure all records are up to date and that the home is operating in line with its Statement of Purpose.

The manager has been in post since January 2009 and Ofsted has not received an application to apply for registration. Whilst there are some valid reasons for the delay, not having a manager registered as fit to carry on the running of the home compromises the development of this service.

Case files are set out well and reflect the approach taken by staff to recognise young people as individuals. Young people have access to the information written about them and contribute to their plans.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
24	ensure the home is of sound construction and kept in good structural repair externally and internally (Regulation 31.2.d)	29/10/2010
34	appoint an individual to manage the children's home. (Regulation 7.1.a)	21/01/2011

Recommendations

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

- ensure when disciplinary measures are used, young people are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them if possible in the records kept by the home. (NMS 22.14)