

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
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Date of last inspection	26 August 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

A local authority operates the children home and it is registered to care for up to six children and young people, both genders, from the age of 13 years up to 17 years old.

The property is detached and located on a residential estate. Accommodation comprises of individual bedrooms for the young people, two comfortable lounges and a dining room. There is a patio and garden area to the rear of the building. Office space is separate.

The home's official purpose had recently changed from short-term care services to more long-term permanency planning. Policies have been adjusted. At the time of the inspection, five young people were on the register. It was possible to speak to two about the quality of care they receive.

The home is within easy travelling distance of community resources including parks, cinema and sports and athletics facilities. Bus routes connect the home with the local community and the national rail link. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

Summary

This interim, unannounced inspection comments on the two outcome areas staying safe and organisation. Progress against recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

The young people are experiencing stable placements allowing them to make progress. They are looked after safely in a stable environment and they understand the full reasons why they are living there. There is good commitment from the young people towards their individual placement arrangements. There are few behaviour management problems. No concerns relating to bullying, physical intervention and sanctions are identified. The management team work closely with local police when young people go missing. A protocol is firmly established. Concerns are recorded and significant events are notified to relevant professionals and agencies. Good safeguarding support is coordinated.

Some interim management arrangements are working well whilst the home's Registered Manager provides support on a temporary basis at a different home. A good percentage of the staff team hold relevant qualifications and they possess relevant experience of working in residential settings. Management support is coordinated well and staff gain access to ongoing training. Each staff member provides a valued role. The staff team is effective and this ensures good continuity with practice on a daily basis.

The accommodation is safe and there are good resources. The young people clearly value their surroundings and there are personal items to show that this is their home. Staff practice embraces equality and diversity principles throughout the range of services being provided. Quality assurance systems show that the management team reflect on practice to develop services in line with new initiatives. Caring and trusted relationships help the young people to develop self worth, self knowledge and self esteem.

This report highlights some recommendations to support practice developments. Reports following monthly regulation 33 visits to the home do not provide good evidence on discussions that occur. The Registered Manager is still to complete a recognised management qualification.

Additional, equality and diversity training is needed to further enhance practice. Records are not clear on how personal development and appraisal is being addressed. There is no record of complaints procedures training being provided. The policy to undertake missing person back to home discussions with each young person is not followed in practice.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or are in the process of being addressed in the case of improving the clarity of management records and the Registered Manager completing full training.

There has been access to safeguarding training. This means staff are better equipped to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse. The staff have relevant experience and are able to coordinate an effective safeguarding response when the young people are most in need. Pathway plans have been established for those young people that are eligible. Health permissions are up to date and maintained on case files.

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.

Arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and this ensures that young people feel listened to and protected. No major concerns were highlighted throughout the course of this inspection. Findings are consistent with other inspections. Good standards of safeguarding practice continue to be demonstrated. Consultation occurs frequently with everyone supporting placements and records show satisfaction with how services are being operated. Staff have good skills to support young people. Young people are experiencing stable placements. A recent emergency placement was terminated. This had no affect on the stability of the home with the other residents continuing to make good progress.

Suitable physical safety and security is afforded for the young people resident at the home. The young people are happy and settled. Individual personalities have been enabled to prosper. The social presentation of the young people is good. The residents have an appreciation of and respect for their peers and the staff members. Working relationships are good.

The safety of each of the young people is given paramount consideration. Suitable risk assessments support decision making. Comprehensive reports are produced when incidents occur. Absconding reporting is in line with a locally established police protocol. This protocol had been reviewed recently. The young people are usually given the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in and many choose to write down their comments. Not every missing from home incident is being discussed in line with the established policy. This could mean potential safeguarding matters are not being identified.

Reporting systems and actions taken in response to significant events are appropriate. Reporting is in line regulations and the relevant people are being informed of significant events. The

Ofsted protocol for reporting significant incidents is known. Incident reports contain suitable details. It is clear what actions are being taken to safeguard residents and prevent similar occurrences. A safeguarding matter from early June 2009 is still under investigation. Full cooperation has been extended to police and the area child protection team. The issue is being managed and there are no concerns affecting the young people resident.

Staff receive suitable safeguarding training in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Young people's welfare remained supported. Policy and procedural guidance has been established that is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. Contact has been established with the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

Safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people within a guide. The guide has recently been revised and provides comprehensive information. The contents of this information is known and young people acknowledge that they suffer no recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. Young people learn to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. There is effective use of positive reinforcement opposed to the use of sanctions. Residents respond very well to praise. There have been no incidents between inspections requiring physical intervention. Staff with key worker responsibilities uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to achieve and develop. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives.

Premises health and safety is being managed well. Certification is held centrally to show servicing and maintenance of the electrical and gas installations and there is regular personal appliance testing. The premises has a modern fire precautions system and the premises fire risk assessment is being reviewed annually. Practice fire drills are carried out. Risk assessments are being maintained. A 'crisis management' plan recently ensured suitable actions were taken when two young people contracted the swine flu virus. Both made a quick and full recovery.

Personnel files are held within the home. These show that robust recruitment procedures are being followed. There was one new appointment between inspections. Full and satisfactory information including an enhanced criminal records bureau check, references, job application with full employment history was viewed for this staff appointment. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

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 good.

Contingency arrangements for the management of the home are suitable whilst the Registered Manager is supporting another local authority home. A plan forwarded to Ofsted on 15 October

2009 outlines interim arrangements. Work has been appropriately delegated between three capable assistant managers.

Service history shows operation and management of the home remains to a good standard. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and associated regulations. No breaches of regulations were identified at this inspection. The needs of the young people are being supported well by a motivated team of staff. Young people remain safe and happy at the home.

Deployment of staff is good. The staffing structure has not experienced many changes between inspections. Staff retention is good. Staff are clear about their roles and this allows them to balance their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people can be met whilst ensuring the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken. Rotas demonstrate that agreed staffing levels are being maintained. A pilot exercise is being undertaken to see if waking night staff are required.

Some of the records at this home lack a little bit of clarity to show how staff are being managed. Induction and foundation training is provided. Supervision frequency continues to be improved. Records are not clearly linked to staff's personal development and an annual appraisal process. There is access to National Vocational Qualification training, at Level 3 and 4, which are recognised qualifications to work in and manage residential settings for children. The Registered Manager is still to complete a suitable management qualification in accordance with national minimum standards. Some equality and diversity training programmes have been delivered. Further training is needed. A staff training attended record is being maintained. Complaints and representations training dates are not captured within the record.

Staff have good written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The responsible local authority has its own intranet where policies, procedures and recording formats are stored. The home's Statement of Purpose provides good information in accordance with regulations. The staff list attached to this important document is up to date. Aims and objectives as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Staff use the written guidance to ensure a consistent response to meeting residents presenting needs. Equality and fairness is reflected within staff's practice and this ensures residents continue to gain positive placement experiences. Staff at the home have invested a lot of time producing a new detailed children's guide.

Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Reports are maintained in-house and these are made available to those permitted to read them. In line with new guidance reports produced following a regulation 33 visit are forwarded to Ofsted. More evidence is needed on the discussions that take place during these visits. There is a written development plan outlining how the home's operation will be maintained. There is some reflection on practice and improvements identified are managed in an efficient way. The home's management team are open to new initiatives.

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 Children's 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

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

- ensure suitable action is taken, and the established missing persons policy followed, in carrying out back to home discussions with each young person upon their return (NMS 19.4)
- complete a suitable management qualification for the post of Registered Manager (NMS 34.3)
- improve the clarity of information within management records (NMS 28.7, 31.4, 31.5)
- ensure all staff access further equality and diversity training and training in the home's complaints procedures (NMS 31.5 & 16.6)
- ensure reports completed under regulation 33 provide suitably detailed information on any discussions that take place with children, their parents, relatives and the staff working at the home. (NMS 32.1)