

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	4 February 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 operated by a local authority for up to six young people aged 11 to 17 years of either gender. The remit of the home has changed to admitting young people in an emergency situation for a time limited period of 12 weeks.

The home is a large detached property situated on the outskirts of a small town with good access to local amenities and public transport. The young people have single bedroom accommodation and a bathroom is located near the bedrooms. There is a room known as the contact room on the first floor where meetings can take place in private.

The communal areas comprise of an open plan dining and living room on the ground floor. There is a yard and a large garden. The home has two cars to transport young people if required.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced full inspection was to check that the key national minimum standards and the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

There are some good aspects to this home. There is a well trained staff team who are clearly committed to looking after children in a time of crisis. They not only work well with individual young people but also work with families to help resolve difficulties with the ultimate aim of having young people return to live with their families.

Young people confirm that staff are approachable and they consider that they are treated fairly.

The shortfalls identified at this inspection include, ensuring young people take their medication as prescribed; to ensure health care plans identify how the home is meeting the health needs of each young person; care plans should clearly set out how all identified needs are to be met to ensure a consistent approach. Child care reviews are not always held within 72 hours of admission, this could lead to young people not being appropriately placed. This is particularly important, as young people are admitted in an emergency, with no assessment been undertaken on the impact of each admission to other young people placed. Some bedrooms contained broken pieces of furniture which undervalues young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has addressed most of the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. Recruitment files show why individuals left previous employment where they worked with children, ensuring only suitable people are employed. New staff have fortnightly supervision ensuring that they are well supported.

As the home has changed its remit some recommendations made at the last inspection are not relevant. As this is now an emergency reception unit it is not always possible to assess the impact on other young people placed.

The bullying risk assessment has been update. The home is embarking on a refurbishment programme to ensure all areas of the home are homely. Although the telephone remains in the same place young people may take it into a quiet corridor to make telephone calls in private. The medication cabinet is secured to a wall to ensure it cannot be removed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals. Care staff prepare meals and young people are encouraged to help. Some young people enjoy baking and this activity is encouraged. The home organises a weekly theme night and young people are invited to put forward suggestions, for example, Chinese nights and Indian nights where everyone is involved in preparing the meal.

Care plans are set out under the every child matters outcomes. However, although these plans identify health issues such as substance misuse and sexualised behaviour the plans are not clear how this is addressed with individual young people.

All young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and appointments are made. This is particularly pertinent for dentists, as a number of individuals have not had dental appointments for a some time prior to admission. Records demonstrate that some individuals had required dental treatment and have received it since being admitted to the home. For those young people who are pregnant, staff have attained information for individuals and give good advice on smoking and drinking alcohol as well as healthy eating.

Medication records are in good order although there is no arrangement for when young people go missing and are on a course of antibiotics. This means that the course is ineffective and can compromise the health of individuals.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people keep their key to their bedroom. All records are maintained in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality.

Young people are encouraged to make complaints via the complaints procedure. Complaints are also able to be made by text to the complaints officer. These are addressed appropriately to the satisfaction of the young people.

All staff have attended safeguarding training and are proactive in ensuring young people are kept safe. Staff work with individuals to build their self esteem to enable them to make better life choices.

Young people are admitted to this home in a time of crisis and much of their behaviour is linked to staying away from their homes for periods of time. The home has good links with the police missing person's co-ordinator and individual protocols are in place according to the vulnerability of the young people.

Young people confirm that they feel safe in the home and any bullying behaviour is addressed by staff.

Each young person has an individual crisis management plan which identifies behaviours and sets out how these behaviours are to be managed. All staff have recently attended an update on therapeutic crisis intervention training which emphasis the behaviour management element to diffuse situations. Staff are confident in managing young people's behaviour in a calm and professional manner and the lack of restraints is testament to them having an effective approach. Sanctions used are appropriate.

Risk assessments are in place for each young person, the premises and activities, identifying the risks with strategies. These are regularly updated to take into account changing circumstances. All health and safety checks are in place as appropriate, for example the water temperature and quality, gas installation and portable electrical appliances. The staff also undertake a health and safety audit to ensure that there are no hazards that put people at risk.

Recruitment files were seen at the personnel office, there are robust recruitment procedures in place ensuring only suitable people are employed. Files are in good order and easy to follow. Although copies of an individual's qualifications were not always on file. Staff are vigilant in checking people's identification when visiting the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are admitted into the home in a time of crisis for a limited period of 12 weeks. Staff are proactive with the young people and quickly identify issues that are causing their home circumstances to break down. Good key work sessions are undertaken with individuals to offer support and address issues. There have been incidents where staff have worked with families and, with support, young people have returned home in a matter of days.

The home accesses a number of services to help meet the needs of the young people, for example the sexual health worker, substance misuse projects and play therapists. The Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) works with some young people and their families as well as offering guidance and support to the staff team. The youth offending service works with some individuals to address offending behaviour.

The home has had some young people who were asylum seekers and, although the home is situated in a white British area, services to meet the specific needs with regard to their religion and culture were accessed.

Many of the young people admitted to the home come without any stable educational placement. In some cases individuals have been out of formal education for a protracted period. Staff are proactive in engaging services of the education liaison officers and alternative educational packages are arranged, for example virtual learning programmes. Staff will also negotiate with educational staff to endeavour to get young people back into school.

As the young people only stay at the home for a relatively short period the home encourages young people to engage in activities that they could access from home. For example, in the town there is a swimming baths and gym which many of the young people use. Other activities, such as the cinema, ice skating and bowling are also accessed. Some young people enjoy horse riding and this activity continues whilst living at the home. All birthdays are celebrated and during half term young people went to an adventure park.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Although care plans are set out under the Every Child Matters outcomes with individual needs identified they do not clearly set out how these needs are to be met whilst living at the home. However, it is clear by the key work recordings that staff are aware of the needs of the young people. All looked after children documentation is on file as appropriate.

Child care reviews are held but these are not always within 72 hours of admission to the home. Young people are encouraged to attend and have their views heard.

Young people's files contain details of contact. The home makes family members welcome at the home who say that staff are very approachable and keep them informed.

The local authority commission a number of external placements and staff are involved in drafting young people's profiles to ensure that individuals are moved onto an appropriate placement.

Regular residents meetings are held which are minuted. These minutes are forwarded to the Registered Manager who will respond to issues the young people have made. Young people confirm that staff listen to them. Young people's views are sought, for example, they were asked to give suggestions for appropriate sanctions, which a number of individuals have responded positively to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are encouraged to help with meal preparation and do their own laundry to help them develop self help skills. However, as young people are only at the home for a short period the emphasis is not on preparing them for adulthood.

The home is undergoing some major refurbishment. Although downstairs areas are quite homely the upstairs requires some extensive work in order to create a homely environment. This work is planned to be undertaken imminently. Young people's bedrooms contain a number of broken items of furniture although some individuals admitted to being responsible for this.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a comprehensive Statement of Purpose clearly outlining what the home has to offer. The current group of young people are involved in reviewing the young people's guide to ensure that it is relevant to them and future young people who may use the service.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people's individual needs are identified.

This is a well qualified staff team who all have National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 or equivalent or are working towards this award. There are good training opportunities particularly relevant to the young people the home accommodates.

The home has changed its remit from a short-term unit to an emergency reception unit. Young people have a time limited placement of 12 weeks. Therefore, extensive work is undertaken

with the young person and their family with the aim of rehabilitation, if at all possible. Staff are undertaking training that is relevant to working with families.

The home has experienced some staffing difficulties but these are more or less resolved. Vacant posts have been filled and long-term sickness is being addressed. Staff rotas demonstrate that there are sufficient staff to meet the individual needs of the young people. When the home is unsettled the Registered Manager is able to bring in more staff or have waking night staff if appropriate.

The Registered Manager undertakes Schedule 6 monitoring and monthly Regulation 33 visits have identified shortfalls which have been promptly addressed.

Young people's files contain all the relevant information, they are well maintained and easy to follow.

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
13	ensure prescribed medication is given as per prescription. (Regulation 21(2)(b))	1 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure the health care plan sets out how the home is to meet the health needs of each young person (NMS 12.1)
- ensure that the placement plan clearly sets out how the assessed needs of each young person are to be met in the home (NMS 2.1)
- ensure a review is initiated within 72 hours of admission to the home (NMS 5.6)
- ensure broken items of furniture are promptly repaired or replaced. (NMS 24.2)