

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sue Winson
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Date of last inspection	21 January 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

The children's home is owned and managed by a private company. The property is a large three storey house, situated close to transport networks, schools and other community facilities.

The home provides care on a medium to long term basis, clothing, support for education, activities and a holiday. All young people have single room accommodation.

Summary

Outcomes for young people at this home are outstanding. Placement planning is thorough and regular monitoring and reviews of the plans ensures that young people continue to make progress. The manager and staff are committed to achieving positive outcomes for young people and they work in partnership, with the young people, their parents, other agencies and professionals. Good communication ensures that young people receive continuity of care. Diversity and equality are promoted in all aspects of the service. Education is valued and young people are assisted to develop skills for their future independent lives. They are fully involved in decision making. The home is efficiently managed and systems for auditing and monitoring are robust. There is an ongoing improvement agenda.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no actions or recommendations made at the last inspection. The manager and the staff group continue to build on good practice and strive to improve outcomes for all the young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy health and nutritious meals and have the opportunity to plan, shop for and prepare meals. They are involved in menu planning and staff promote healthy options. Meals are routinely taken at the table and are social occasions. Staff monitor individual diets and take opportunities as they arise to talk with young people about healthy eating and kitchen hygiene.

Comprehensive health plans are in place which are based on full information from placing authorities on individual health histories and emotional and physical needs. These are monitored, reviewed on a monthly basis and kept fully up to date. All the young people are registered with local doctors, dentists and opticians and are encouraged to keep appointments. They receive specialist health services to meet their needs. The staff have a strong focus on health promotion and use local specialist agencies and services, some of whom come in to speak with young people about health issues. Exercise is promoted in ways which encourage young people to be involved.

Young people are safeguarded by the home's policies and practices for the administration of medication. Full records are maintained and staff ensure that medication is safely stored and

dispensed. Regular monitoring of stocks of medication and first aid equipment take place. Staff have received training in the safe administration of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's privacy is maintained and information is confidentially handled. Staff promote mutual respect within the home and knock on bedroom doors before entering. Young people can make telephone calls or have conversations with visitors in private. Personal files and records are securely stored in the staff office which is locked when not in use.

Complaints received by the home have been addressed without delay and the complainant has been kept informed of progress. Young people know of their right to complain and a range of people they can complain to. Information is available to them in the telephone room which includes contact numbers and addresses. Staff sign that they have read the complaints procedure and regularly ask the young people if they have any complaints or concerns.

Young people are safeguarded by the home's child protection policies and practices. Copies of the local safeguarding board procedures and the company's whistle blowing policy are available for staff. The Local Authority Designated Officer has been to a staff meeting recently to explain their role. Staff receive regular training in child protection and the manager monitors safe care practices. They were clear that in the event of an allegation or suspicion of abuse, the safety of the young people would be paramount. All relevant people are notified of significant events. Young people are protected from bullying by the home's procedures and practices. There have been no incidents and young people are aware of their rights and understand what constitutes bullying behaviour.

Young people who are missing from home are protected in accordance with written guidance. Individual risk assessments are in place and full records of incidents are maintained which demonstrate that all the necessary actions and notifications have been completed. Young people are welcomed on return and have individual sessions with staff to discuss their absences. The home has been successful in reducing the number of incidents of missing from home recently.

The staff group communicate well to ensure a consistent approach to behaviour management. Policies are in place which are followed in practice. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their behaviour and are encouraged and reminded about the consequences of their actions. Sanctions are rarely used and there have been no restraints for over eighteen months. Rules and expectations are clear to the young people who described them as fair and reasonable. A reward system is in place which is based on achievable personal goals and which allows them to earn extra money each week. Staff have been trained in positive behaviour management.

The home provides physical safety and security. All necessary checks are carried out regularly and any hazards are dealt with in reasonable times scales through the company's maintenance department. Both generic and individual risk assessments inform staff practice. They include action planning and strategies to reduce or minimise risk. They are regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. Systems are in place to communicate any changes to all staff.

There is careful selection and vetting of staff and the manager ensures that all necessary checks have been carried out prior to anyone starting work in the home. He is involved in interviews and all new staff have an induction period to familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures. All staff Criminal Record Bureau checks are updated in line with the company's guidelines.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people say they are well supported and that they can approach any staff for help or advice. The home operates a key worker system whose role in monitoring outcomes is clear to the young people. Individual planned key worker sessions take place regularly and address issues identified in the placement plans. In addition all staff take opportunities as they arise to undertake unplanned individual work, which takes place at least once a day. The staff are clearly skilled in engaging young people in innovative and flexible ways. Outside agencies and professionals come in to discuss issues with the young people and staff advocate on their behalf for services.

The education of young people is successfully promoted and all of them are in education or work. Certificates of achievement are displayed in the hallway and some of the young people have taken or gained passes in public examinations. Relationships between the home and schools benefit the young people and staff attend meetings and events. Young people have help with homework and a personal computer is available for their use. Community involvement is promoted and young people attend local events and are encouraged to join in activities locally and to make friends, who are welcomed in the home. Young people pursue their individual interests in addition to choosing outings and group activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are assessed and comprehensive written placement plans outline how they will be met. These inform the individual work carried out and are working documents which are adapted as young people's needs change. Outcomes for young people are constantly monitored, as is the effectiveness of plans and strategies. Young people are encouraged to contribute to their plans. Monthly reports demonstrate that young people are making progress. Statutory reviews also monitor care planning and young people are supported to attend and give their views and opinions.

Staff support and encourage young people to remain in contact with their families and friends, and work with parents for the benefit of the young people. Parents are kept informed of events and progress and are encouraged to ring the home or visit. Where necessary staff take young people to contact, sometimes over long distances.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned manner wherever possible. Where visits have not been possible staff are sensitive to the feelings of the young person and ensure they are welcomed and introduced to the other young people. Staff also support young people to move on and prepare a photograph album and mementos for them to take with them. Those who have left the home can, and do, return to visit.

Young people are fully involved in decision making in the home at all levels. They are asked for their views and opinions as part of everyday life and weekly young people's meetings allow for more formal group discussions and decision making. Young people said that it is more like living in a family than a home and that they have choices.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive care which helps to prepare them and support them into adulthood. Comprehensive independent living plans are compiled with them. They have the opportunity to budget, plan and prepare meals and decide how to spend their clothing and personal allowances. The pace and range of skills development is tied to individual needs and abilities. When young people leave, the home prepares a pack for them, containing information they may need for the future.

The home is well designed and suitable for purpose. Young people choose colours and furnishings for their own rooms and for communal areas. The home is well furnished, in a homely style and there are adequate facilities. A rolling programme of refurbishment ensures that standards are maintained. Any emergency repairs are carried out within reasonable timescales.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are encouraged to take part in community events and activities. The staff group is diverse and reflects the local community. Young people are included in decision making and are informed of their rights. Care planning is individualised and looks at their holistic needs. Respect is promoted in the home.

The home has a statement of purpose, which has been updated to reflect staffing changes and which outlines the services provided and how it operates. The young people's guide contains full information and is written in appropriate language.

Young people are looked after by competent, qualified staff who are trained to meet their needs and who are focussed on achieving positive outcomes for all the young people. The management group consists of the manager, deputy and two team leaders and they provide effective leadership to the staff team, many of whom have worked in the home for some time. Any necessary staff cover is provided from the company's bank staff who are known to the young people and agency staff are not used. The staff team communicate well and provide a consistent approach for the young people who value them and say that they are there for help and support. Staff supervision is focussed on competence and professional development and they are well supported and their ideas and contributions to the improvement agenda are valued.

The home is well managed, efficiently run and effectively monitored. The manager has been registered with Ofsted since the last inspection and has the necessary skills, qualifications and experience. Visits under Regulation 33 are carried out monthly and comprehensive reports provided which contribute to the robust monitoring systems which ensures that records are up to date and young people's needs are consistently being met. The home's development plan lacks information about the operation and resources of the home.

Young people's development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality in well organised files. Staff can find information easily.

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

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

- ensure that the home has a development plan for the future of the home which is reviewed annually (NMS 33).