

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	26 January 2010
Inspector	Vivien Slyfield
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	27 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 home provides medium to long-term care for up to six young people of either gender aged 10 years to under 18 years. The large detached house has a front car park and a fenced rear garden. The premises include two staff offices, a large kitchen, dining room, lounge, a quiet room and an education room. All bedrooms are single and are situated on the first floor. There are sufficient toilets, showers and baths for the young people. There is a flat to enable young people to acquire independence skills and this is used to support young people in placement within the home. The home has several areas to hold meetings and for young people to meet family members in private. It is situated 10 minutes from a city centre with nearby bus stops enabling young people to commute into the city and surrounding areas. The home has its own transport in the form of a people carrier.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection which considered the key national minimum standards in the outcome areas of being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well being and organisation. The inspection considered how the home is managed and how staff are supported. The progress towards the recommendations made during the last inspection were also considered. Five young people were living in the home during the inspection.

The overall judgement for this home is good. Each young person receives a focused level of care and support that successfully promotes their personal, social and educational development. The acting manager provides good day-to-day support and effective guidance to staff to enable them to do their work. The home ensures young people are protected and that known and potential risks are managed in a way that supports their safety and wellbeing.

Five recommendations have been made as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made at the last inspection both of which have been addressed by the manager and staff.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a varied diet and contribute to the menu planning and on occasions the preparation and shopping for food. There is a four week rotating plan for menus, which can be varied to reflect the needs of individual young people. Personal preferences are considered and an alternative to the menu provided if requested. Staff record the meals actually eaten by the young people and monitor their diet if necessary. Young people can access snacks and drinks when they wish although fruit is no longer left out as it was thrown around. The amount of fruit and fresh vegetables included in the menus is limited on occasions.

Young people's health needs are identified and met through a written health plan. Young people are registered with the local General Practitioner and are supported to attend the dentist

and optician on a regular basis. A record is made of appointments which young people refuse to attend. A Child In Care (CIC) nurse visits regularly and has the opportunity to get to know the young people and discuss their health needs. Concerns about the use of drugs and alcohol are raised with the individual young people and their behaviour challenged. There is close liaison with the local Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS), which provides valuable advice for the staff. Medication is given out in accordance with the home's procedures and specific directions from the GP. Staff record when medication is dispensed and initial each record. This is regularly checked by the manager. All medication is stored in a safe and secure cabinet. Written consent by those with parental responsibility, for staff to administer non-prescription medication is not available on each young person's care plan.

The health needs of young people are well met.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people feel safe and there are systems in place to ensure their welfare is protected. Young people are confident in talking to staff and that any concerns they raise will be addressed. There is an anti-bullying policy in place and young people are confident about how situations are dealt with.

There are clear expectations about young people's behaviour. Staff are aware of young people's individual concerns and how specific behaviour should be managed. Staff ensure that privacy is respected and that due consideration is given to the ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, faith, belief and gender of the young people. There is a full record of sanctions and young people commented that they understood why sanctions were imposed and generally felt they were fair. There are very few instances where restraint has been used, there has been one since the last inspection, and it is appropriately recorded. Similarly situations where young people are missing without permission are recorded. There is effective liaison with the local community police.

The Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures are available to staff who are aware of the process to refer to the child protection teams. Staff receive regular safeguarding training.

There is a delegated, experienced member of staff who has responsibility for health and safety within the home. Risk assessments are in place and are reviewed and updated. Fire safety checks are consistently carried out and fully recorded. The Control Of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) material is securely stored. The home has a certificate of the current public and employee liability insurance. The use of a wall switch for one of the bathrooms, rather than a cord pull switch may be a health and safety concern.

The recruitment files for staff are not held at the home and therefore it has not been possible to check these on this visit.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Individual support is provided for young people to help them with their behaviour or emotional responses. The home has contact with the CAMHS who provide counselling if young people wish to engage with them. Key worker sessions also provide support for young people and are

seen to work effectively by staff. Young people's individual interests and hobbies are encouraged and supported. There is clear evidence of warm and positive relationships between staff and young people demonstrated through humour, flexibility and care.

Education is strongly promoted within the home. Personal education plans (PEP's) record the educational targets for the young people. There are examples of staff working closely with schools to encourage young people's attendance and also to advocate for young people to maintain them in school when there have been problems.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Placement plans provide the necessary detail for staff to identify young people's needs. These plans are regularly reviewed and are effective working documents for staff. Young people are consulted about their future and if they wish, attend their review. Staff make a full contribution to young people's statutory reviews.

Contact arrangements are clear and staff support young people to maintain regular contact with their families, where this is appropriate. This can involve transportation or funds to ensure the young person is able to meet their family members. Some young people meet with their families in a room in the home, which provides a private and comfortable setting. A telephone is provided for young people, which allows them to make contact with family and friends in privacy.

There are regular key working sessions and young people contribute to their daily lives and their future plans. Young people are able to express their views on a wide range of areas such as meals and activities. They are consulted about any redecoration of the home and devised questions to be used as part of the recruitment process for new staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged and supported to develop the skills they need for daily life. They are given choice in their clothes and how they spend their pocket money. The home has a flat that is used to allow young people to move towards independence while retaining support. Older young people have a planned progression from cooking some meals, to shopping and spending increasing amounts of time in the flat.

As a purpose built home the building does not lend itself to the development of a homely atmosphere, however, a real effort has been made to address this. The home is well decorated, there are pictures on the walls and ornaments in all the rooms. The rooms are spacious and well furnished. There is an atmosphere of welcome and a sense of the home being valued. The exception to this is the gender and disabled signs on the toilet doors on both floors which give an institutional feel.

The home creates an environment in which young people feel safe and respected.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A Statement of Purpose is in place which is reviewed annually. It reflects the services offered by the home except that care is offered to young people remanded by the courts, which is not included. A children's guide is in place which covers all the areas specified in the regulations. It has recently been revised and young people were consulted about its presentation and content.

Care is offered to young people by a stable, skilled and committed staff team. Despite a reduced staff group, due mainly to sickness, the acting manager has maintained staff consistency to ensure young people have a minimal amount of disruption and are cared for by staff who know them. The organisation has a good staff training programme that includes key areas of learning for new staff as well as refresher training for existing team members. Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and shift teams are sufficient in number to provide the right care, support and supervision. The acting manager ensured an appropriate increase in staffing to address a difficult situation with the young people. One of the effects of the diminished staff group is that supervision has not taken place within the required timescales. The manager has taken action to address this but the changes have not had time to have an effect yet. There is informal support and staff said 'the managers are easy to talk to'. Appraisals have continued to take place annually.

Staff say they feel well supported through team meetings and by the manager and colleagues who are available and approachable. Staff spoke very positively about working in the home. One member of staff stated, 'we work well together as a team ... no-one is just left to get on with it'. Another member of staff commented, 'I think we work brilliantly together as a staff group'. It is noteworthy that morale has remained so strong during a difficult period.

The manager has systems in place to monitor the operation of the home and the overall progress of each young person. Regular visits are made to the home by organisational representatives and their findings are reflected in written monitoring reports.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are at the centre of all the work and their needs are addressed. This has been especially relevant in the care offered to young people seeking asylum, where efforts have been made to address their cultural needs and interpreters used to assist them in settling into the home as well as in relation to communication.

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):

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- ensure that prior written permission is obtained and retained on file, from a person with parental responsibility for each child, for the administration of first aid and appropriate non-prescription medication (national minimum standard 13.4)
 - ensure that positive steps are taken to keep children, staff and visitors safe from risk from fire and other hazards, with reference to the light switch in one of the bathrooms (national minimum standard 26.1)
 - ensure the home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment, with reference to the signs on the toilet doors (national minimum standard 24.2)
 - ensure that the home has a written Statement of Purpose which accurately describes what the home sets out to do for the children it accommodates and the manner in which that care is provided, with reference to the accommodation of young people remanded by the courts (national minimum standard 1.1)
 - ensure that all staff and others working in the home receive at least one and a half hours of one to one supervision from a senior member of staff each month (national minimum standard 28.2).