

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC036917
Inspection date	08/07/2010
Inspector	Cheryl Carter
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	15/12/2009
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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 care home is a children and adolescent unit providing short- and medium-term residential care for up to five young people of both sexes between the ages of 10 and 17. The home also undertakes outreach work with young people and their families, either to prevent the need for accommodation, or to support them once they have left the unit.

The home is a three-storey purpose-built house on a residential road in South London. There are five bedrooms for young people, all single occupancy. The home aims to provide a safe, nurturing environment where young people's care plans can be put into action. Young people and their families are involved in the reviewing process, and staff work closely with them, placing social workers and other professionals to achieve positive outcomes for the young people in their care.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced inspection that covered all of the key national minimum standard for children's homes. There are three children currently residing at the home. One has been in placement for some time and two have only recently moved in. Children's privacy and confidentiality are well respected and there is sufficient space available for children to have quiet time on their own if they wish. There is however an overreliance on monetary sanctions to encourage young people to cooperate with staff and not go absent from the home without authority. Issues raised at young people's meetings are not recorded as complaints although, for some of these issues, a more formal follow up may be appropriate with a record kept in the complaints log.

Staffing levels are good, and most staff access training in key areas, such as safeguarding, although for a small minority of staff this has not been updated. The lines of accountability within the home are clear and staff are receiving monthly supervision. Care plans for young people are satisfactory, however, information relating to health and contact is not consistently recorded. Weekly fire point tests are conducted and regular fire drills are carried out. However, the home does not record the names of the staff and young people participating in the drill so there is no way of ensuring that all staff have been involved in the process of evacuation from the home in case of fire. The garden fence is not sufficiently secure.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the home was required to address six actions. There is now a policy and guidance in place that sets out how and when it is appropriate to carry out room searches. All room searches are recorded with the date, time and the reason for the search. The method of recording restraint has changed to take on board the reasons why restraint was necessary and the method of restraint used by staff. There were no incidents of restraint since the last inspection. The public liability insurance is now displayed and this is up to date. The gas safety checks have been completed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people are involved in menu planning and sometimes in the preparation of meals. Menus show a varied diet is provided, however, the menus are not always followed and staff do not always record what is actually served to the young people. The personal preferences and any special dietary or cultural needs are incorporated into the meals served.

Food safety is compromised by the practices observed in the home. There were a number of food items in the fridge that had been opened, some were labelled and dated others were not. The cupboard had food items that were clearly out of date. The freezer had items of food that had passed the use-by date, which staff indicated was due to be prepared the previous day. These arrangements for food storage does not promote food safety in the home.

The physical, emotional and health needs of each young person are identified and appropriate action is taken to secure the medical, dental and other health services needed to meet them. However, health plans do not always have all information, such as the last dental check or optician's appointments recorded. There are clear procedures in place that provide young people with the guidance, advice and support on their health and personal care issues appropriate to the needs and wishes. There is a no smoking policy within the home and those young people who choose to smoke are actively discouraged to do so. There is also zero tolerance on drugs and alcohol and young people spoken to are aware of this.

Young people's welfare is promoted through the home's policies and procedures for handling medication and providing first aid. All medication is held securely and only those staff members who have been trained may handle medication. A written record is kept by the home of all medication given and only the homely remedies agreed by the general practitioner and parents are used in the home. Most of the staff have had first aid training and there is always a first aider on duty in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people are provided with adequate privacy through individual bedrooms. They have access to their rooms at all times and indicate that the staff respect their privacy. Other rooms within the communal areas of the home are available to the young people if they wish to meet with their family or other significant adults in their lives. They can make telephone calls in private.

There is a complaints policy in place and the young people are made aware of the steps to take if they wish to register a concern. There were no recorded complaints from the young people in the complaints log although a number of issues are raised by young people at their regular meetings. While these are not recorded as complaints there is not always a clear record of how these issues have been resolved nor is it sufficiently clear whether the young person is in fact making a complaint.

The home considers the safeguarding of young people to be of paramount importance. There are risk assessments in place which govern the dangers posed to young people inside and outside of the home. Safeguards are put in place to monitor the safety of young people who absent themselves from the home. However, young people are penalised when they return by having to pay back for phone calls made when they are absent from the home. The staff have a good awareness of the action to take in response to a disclosure or observation of child abuse and they participate in safeguarding training.

There is an anti-bullying policy in place and this is closely linked to safeguarding principles. Good social interaction is promoted within the home with adequate staff supervision and support. All the young people currently in the home get on well together and generally respond positively to staff intervention. The young people are supported to display acceptable social behaviour both within the home and the wider community.

Strategies used to help the young people manage their behaviour are documented. However, sanctions used are repetitive and evaluation of how these sanctions are working for young people is not yet clearly impacting on the development of behaviour management strategies.

Risk assessments are routinely completed and cover generic as well as individual risks. There are various formats designed to record the outcome of weekly and monthly checks on equipment and the premises. Fire safety logs record checks made on fire prevention, including fire drills. The record of fire drills does not record the names of staff and young people who participated in the fire drill; as a result there is no system to ensure that all staff have participated in fire drills at the home. Risk assessments or service agreements relating to the electric showers used in the home were unavailable. The rear wire fencing has been damaged which compromises security at the rear of the property. Strangers have been able to enter the rear garden through the fence on at least two occasions and no assessment of the risk

posed by the damage to the fence has yet been undertaken.

The local authority's central human resources team coordinates staff recruitment. The procedures ensure the home employs suitable staff, who can meet the needs of the young people. All staff working at the home have received an appropriate Criminal Records Bureau check. Agency staff covering vacancies have internal checks undertaken by the manager. All visitors to the home are asked to sign the visitor book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Individual support is provided to young people in line with their needs and wishes. Staff interact well with the young people and have a good understanding of their needs. Education is valued by the home and staff take positive action to promote young people's education. Staff are involved in ensuring that young people participate fully in all aspects of education and fully support young people to attend events at their school, ensuring that they are appropriately dressed for the occasion. Photographs are taken to record key events that provide a record of their stay at the home. Staff make positive contributions to educational reviews and this helps to promote young people's well-being.

Good systems are in place to help young people pursue their personal interests and to engage in leisure activities. There is a well-maintained garden available and staff are proactive in ensuring that young people enjoy this area. Young people have a room at the end of the garden where they can do their art work. Some young people have also grown some strawberries, tomatoes and lettuce this year and they are very proud of their achievements. Young people enjoy activities, such as spending time with other young people and staff, listening to music, watching television and videos, going on shopping trips, swimming, roller skating, eating out and a number of other fun things. They are also looking forward to their summer holiday at the end of July.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff implement clear procedures to help young people when they move into the home. This ensures young people are able to move into and leave the home in a sensitive manner. Young people's needs are comprehensively assessed and there are good written placement plans in place which provide staff with clear information. This enables staff to provide care in accordance with young people's needs. There are regular reviews of young people's placements to ensure the home continues to meet their changing needs.

Young people's opinions are sought over their daily lives and futures. There are formal systems in place to do this, such as residents' meetings, which young people are encouraged to attend. There are also plenty of informal opportunities for young

people to give their views to staff about everyday matters which concern them.

Staff support young people's contact with friends and family so they can maintain relationships with people important to them. Contact details are unclear and do not provide staff with up-to-date information enabling them to properly manage contact arrangements. Telephone contact and personal visits are encouraged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home provides a comfortable environment for young people which is decorated and furnished to a reasonable standard. The ground floor would benefit from redecoration and the carpets on the stairs are worn. Despite this the staff do all they can to make the facilities homely. Young people have their own rooms which they may personalise. They are encouraged to contribute their ideas on how the home and their own rooms are decorated. There is adequate storage and furnishings in bedrooms to meet young people's requirements. There are sufficient bathroom facilities for the number of young people living in the home. While the bathrooms are clean they would benefit from some refurbishment. No safety checks on the electric showers have been completed.

At this purpose-built property, there is ample communal space where young people may meet with visitors in private. There is an average sized garden for young people's use where they have opportunities to grow fruit and vegetables.

Opportunities are provided to help young people develop useful independence skills, such as shopping and preparing meals. There is a carefully planned pre-independence training programme in place for young people planning to move onto a semi-independent living programme. When skills are learned and demonstrated by the young person, these are documented and the young person will then move to the next stage or to preparing for independence.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

This is generally a well-managed home. Young people, parents and placing social workers have the information they need about the home in a clear Statement of Purpose and young people's guide. There is a stable and competent staff team and clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the absence of the Registered Manager.

There are sufficient staff employed to meet the needs of young people. Some of these staff are agency staff as some permanent posts remain vacant. The Registered Manager has stated that at least two of these posts will be filled over the next few weeks. These arrangements should improve the consistency of care provided for young people. Many of the staff are trained to at least National Vocational Qualification at level 3 Children and Young People. Staff training in first aid, food

hygiene, and safeguarding have been updated, however, a small minority of staff are without up-to-date training in food hygiene and safeguarding.

All new staff members undergo a formal induction and records are kept in order to monitor staff's suitability to work with young people. Young people's files are well kept and stored securely. The monitoring visits of the home are carried out consistently and records are checked and signed off. The Registered Manager monitors the home against the Statement of Purpose to ensure that the care offered remains relevant and current. The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is satisfactory. Young people have a package of care that suits their individual assessed needs.

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
22	ensure that the use of sanctions in the home is not unreasonable.(Regulation 17.1)	04/08/2010
26	ensure the unnecessary risks to the health and safety of children accommodated in the home are identified and, so far as possible, eliminated. (Regulation 23.c)	04/08/2010
24	ensure that the home is kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained in particular regarding the wear to the carpets and the maintenance of electric showers (Regulation 31.2e).	04/08/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that menus reflect the meals actually served to the young people (NMS 10)
- ensure that there is a system in place to ensure that out-of-date food is removed from and not cooked in the home.(NMS 10)
- ensure that health care plans are kept up to date (NMS 12)
- ensure that there is a system in place to record the names of all staff and young people participating in fire drills. (NMS 26)
- ensure that contact arrangements for each child are clearly recorded (NMS 4).