

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Lindsey Blickem
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Date of last inspection	2 March 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 care and accommodation for up to seven children aged between eight and 14 years of age who have emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home is situated in a quiet residential area and the accommodation comprises of a dining room, lounge, play room and study room. The children each have their own bedroom. A bathroom and a shower room are on the first floor. There is a garden to the rear of the building which has a grassed area and is used by the children for playing games. There is space at the front of the house for parking cars. There are currently seven children living in the home, some of whom were present during parts of the inspection and contributed to the inspection process.

Summary

This was an announced key inspection. All key national minimum standards were inspected. The progress made in meeting actions raised at the previous inspection in March 2009 were also monitored.

The overall rating is good. Being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are all rated good. Achieving economic well-being is rated satisfactory.

Young people's health needs are well met through good provision of health advice and support. The administration of medication system is safely and efficiently managed. Young people's views are taken seriously and they have the opportunity to raise concerns or issues which are dealt with effectively by staff. Bullying behaviour is proactively and robustly addressed thereby reducing its impact on young people. Behaviour management is effective and safely managed. Staff vetting and recruitment is robust and ensures young people are cared for safely. Young people are successfully encouraged and supported to attend and achieve in school and enjoy regular and varied activities. Young people's needs are comprehensively assessed and reviewed ensuring that their individual needs are well met. The accommodation is generally reasonably well maintained although some areas of the home are poorly maintained. Staff are managed effectively and efficiently and are well supported through supervision and training. There are some minor administrative shortfalls in relation to medication and measures of control.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager was asked to make improvements to fire safety, the adequacy of staffing, records in relation to the use of measures of control, the development of the premises and records in relation to managing complaints. Improvements have been made in all these areas thereby improving safety, administrative efficiency and the overall quality of care given to young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy a varied, substantial and well balanced diet. Menus are prepared in advance and reflect the individual preferences of young people and are written using healthy eating guidelines. Meals are taken in the dining room where staff and young people eat together in

a sociable and relaxed environment. Fresh fruit and snacks are available at most times during the day and young people contribute to constructing menus through residents' meetings. There are regular themed nights where young people sample cuisine from different countries whilst also exploring the wider culture of the country of choice.

Medication records are generally well maintained and details of medication administered to young people includes the name of the medication, date, time and balance. There are also clear records made of medication coming into the home as well as when medication is finished or disposed of. There is no central medication record of medicine administered to young people in addition to the individual medication record sheets kept in their case files thereby creating the risk that there is no permanent record made of medication given to young people. There are also some minor errors in recording such as duplication. Medication is securely stored in a lockable cabinet in the staff office. Overall the system is safe and well maintained with some minor administrative shortfalls.

Young people's health needs are promoted and safeguarded. Placement plans contain details of young people's specific health needs and how they will be met. Case files contain parental consent in relation to securing emergency medical attention, administering medication and minor treatment. Young people have regular routine appointments with a dentist, optician and GP. The Looked After Children (LAC) nurse holds monthly drop in surgeries in the home as well as ensuring young people have an annual health assessment. Overall young people have good access to support and advice in relation to health and medical issues.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and there is no unnecessary intrusion whilst they spend time alone. Staff observe simple etiquette by knocking before entering a young person's room and the home has a number of areas where young people can spend time alone undisturbed. All written records are securely kept in either of the two offices and discussions with or about young people are held privately and discreetly.

Young people have access to a formal complaints procedure and when a concern is raised this is responded to fully and appropriately by the manager. Young people are encouraged to put in writing any concerns or issues they have using an 'I'd really like to tell you' form which in turn is responded to by the manager with a 'Thank you' form. The complaints procedure can also be accessed by significant others including parents and neighbours. The manager gives a full and detailed written account of what measures have been taken to address a concern or complaint, apologising where appropriate. Overall the system for dealing with complaints is transparent, accessible and young people's complaints are taken seriously.

All staff attend mandatory safeguarding training and there is a close working relationship with the Local Authority Safeguarding unit for discussion and advice. The monthly visits on behalf of the Responsible Individual are undertaken by a safeguarding manager who is also available for support and advice. Staff are aware of how to deal with a concern or allegation and the system for referring to a senior manager is clear. Young people's welfare is therefore appropriately safeguarded.

Young people are protected from bullying through a robust and transparent culture which both protects young people whilst also enabling them to understand what bullying is and its impact.

Staff have positively engaged with young people and have recently completed a project which looks at bullying behaviour. A wall display on the subject of bullying is located in the main entrance hall. Positive behaviour is actively encouraged by staff and bullying behaviour is minimised within a harmonious environment.

Incidents of young people missing without authority are well managed and appropriate records are made of when a young person goes missing and when statutory agencies are informed. Staff make a clear distinction between what is considered a high risk event (missing from care) with what is considered a lower risk (unauthorised absence). These are clearly communicated to police so that appropriate action can be taken to find a young person who is missing.

Young people are encouraged to behave in a socially acceptable manner through good behaviour management techniques. Sanctions are generally reparative in nature and require young people to give back to the community when they have behaved inappropriately; this may result in them performing additional chores or have privileges like activities taken away. Written records are generally well maintained and give a clear account of any incident which results in a sanction being administered. There are, however, examples of sanctions being poorly recorded and give an impression of an open ended sanction being in place.

The use of physical restraint is managed safely and only when appropriate to do so, for example when a young person is displaying violent or high risk behaviours. Physical restraint is only used by staff who are trained in approved techniques and written records reflect that techniques used are ones approved in training. Records also include an outcome and provide young people with an opportunity to record their views in relation to any incident involving restraint.

Incentive schemes are in place to encourage positive behaviours. Staff monitor behaviour on a day to day basis with judgements made using base line behaviours such as general attitude, getting to school and self management. The overall outcome is that young people are generally responding well to staff and are as a result enjoying more positive outcomes.

Young people are protected from the risk of fire through regular testing of fire alarm tests, emergency lighting and smoke detectors. There are also regular checks of fire exits, fire plans, electrical sockets, fire extinguishers and carbon monoxide monitors. Young people are aware of the evacuation procedures and there are regular fire drills.

Young people's welfare is protected through robust vetting and recruitment of staff. Prior to starting work staff are subject to Criminal Records Bureau checks and two written references are in place. There is also evidence of identification and employment history on staff personnel files.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are given good support on a day to day basis and also through regular keyworker sessions. Individual support in relation to specific needs identified in young people's placement plans is also good and ensures that they are cared for appropriately in line with their needs. Staff are accessible at all times during the day and are caring and attentive to young people ensuring that they are kept positively occupied and have the opportunity to discuss or raise any issues.

Young people are given good support in attending education and are enjoying good success both in terms of attending and achieving in school. Staff closely monitor attendance and attainment including ensuring that homework is completed and that there is good communication between home and school. Young people who are not in full time education engage with in house educational activities including completing worksheets and attending the library. Additional activities such as clubs and individual tutoring sessions are in place to ensure young people are actively engaged with education throughout the day.

Young people are actively engaged in regular activities including clubs and hobbies outside of the home. Individual interests are encouraged and supported by staff including fishing, judo and swimming. Friends are regularly invited to stay for tea ensuring that young people enjoy a healthy social life where friendships are encouraged. School holidays are well planned in terms of ensuring there are activities on offer every day which young people help to plan and prepare for. Young people are also engaged with projects such as developing the garden and pond and overall have a very active and healthy lifestyle where they are encouraged to develop socially.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are comprehensively assessed through clearly written individualised placement plans. Plans are written using the Every Child Matters outcome headings and include health, education and contact arrangements. The plans include up to date information in relation to specific health needs and how these will be met, arrangements for education including any additional support being given to the young person and arrangements in relation to contact with family. Each young person also has an individual risk assessment contained within their current file which identifies specific issues in relation to their circumstances or behaviour that may cause concern. Risk assessments include action to be taken by staff in order to minimise risk.

Looked after children reviews are held within statutory timescales and the minutes of young people's reviews are contained within their case file. The review minutes reflect the progress made by each young person whilst living in the home and ensure that health, education and contact arrangements are reviewed and any issues are identified thereby ensuring young people's needs are effectively reviewed.

Contact arrangements are detailed within young people's placement plans and staff actively encourage and support these arrangements ensuring that young people have planned and positive contact with their family. Friends are made very welcome in the home and young people regularly have them over for tea; additionally young people enjoy visits to their friends' homes ensuring they have an active social life.

Prior to a young person being admitted to the home they are encouraged to visit several times and wherever possible staff go and meet with the young person at their previous placement. The number of introductory visits depends on the young person's circumstances and a recent admission involved four visits. The management team try to gather as much information about a young person prior to admission as far as is possible to ensure the process is as positive as possible.

Children's meetings are held regularly and for the majority of meetings detailed minutes are made and include action to be taken as a result of the views expressed by young people.

Meetings are productive and constructive and include discussions about activities, bullying and healthy lifestyles. Four young people have independent visitors who regularly visit them and the children's rights officer visits monthly. Young people are actively involved in the running of the home and their views are taken seriously. Staff work hard and successfully engage young people in discussions about significant issues that effect their lives.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people enjoy living in a comfortable, spacious and well furnished home. Staff have created and maintained a very welcoming and reasonably attractive home despite some areas being less well maintained such as the bathrooms and toilets. The décor throughout the home is satisfactory and the wall displays including photographs create a positive atmosphere which creates an impression that young people are actively involved with how their home looks. The dining room is well furnished and attractively decorated and despite the kitchen appearing industrial, young people treat it as their own. The staff office is discreetly situated on the ground floor and the lounge is comfortably furnished and reasonably decorated. The ground floor bathroom is functional although unattractive and showing signs of deterioration. Young people have spacious and well furnished bedrooms including a bed, wardrobe and chest of drawers and are personalised to their own tastes. The design of the building detracts from the efforts made by staff to make the accommodation more homely; the first floor has a number of doors and corridors which creates a rather institutional environment although the young people seem quite comfortable with it. Overall the accommodation is satisfactory although there are shortfalls in relation to the design and aspects of the décor.

Young people are encouraged to learn independence skills relative to their age and development; these include walking to school on their own or into town, tidying their bedrooms (with assistance from staff) and being involved with cooking and other domestic chores. Activities throughout the summer included the 'pond project' which involved young people planning and assisting with putting a new pond in the back garden. The plan for refurbishing the garden also involves young people planning and assisting.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of purpose is currently under review following the last inspection to take account of the changes in staffing in relation to roles and responsibilities. Otherwise this document contains all required information in relation to the facilities and services provided to young people. The children's guide provides young people with relevant information about the home including education, contact, health and the complaints procedure in a child friendly format.

Young people are cared for by staff who are well supported through regular formal supervision and training opportunities. Staff are encouraged to develop professionally by attending training which includes safeguarding, first aid, food hygiene, National Vocational Qualifications, Unisafe (physical restraint and de escalation techniques) and medication training. Training needs are identified in supervision and highlighted in the training matrix. Staff performance is reviewed and evaluated during formal supervision and personal goals are set as appropriate.

Staff are very attentive and caring towards young people and there is always a sufficient number on duty at any time. Although the home is currently carrying two full time staff vacancies,

duties are either covered by permanent staff or relief staff who are known to the young people and are familiar with the home. Overall the adequacy of staff in terms of numbers, skills and experience is very good and the young people receive good quality care specific to their needs.

Visits on behalf of the responsible individual occur monthly and a written report is produced promptly. These visits contribute effectively to the management of the home as they identify strengths and weaknesses from a more objective point of view thereby assisting the manager in reviewing the quality of the service.

Case files are well maintained and kept securely in the staff office. Files contain all required information in relation to Schedule 6 and provide a good written record of the progress made by young people living in the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive individualised care and their specific needs are well met. The culture of the home reflects the backgrounds of young people cared for and there are good opportunities for young people to learn about different cultures and actively engage in the local community.

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
13	keep an accurate record of all medication, prescribed and non-prescribed (Regulation 21) (2) (c)	30 October 2009
13	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure that they are kept up to date, this is in relation to a record of the receipt, disposal and administration of any medicine to any child (Regulation 29) (1) Schedule 4 (5)	30 October 2009
22	maintain an accurate and up to date record of measures of control used, as set out in Regulation 17 (Regulation 17) (4)	30 October 2009
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by the children are kept clean and reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31) (2) (e).	2 November 2009

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.