

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10 March 2010
Inspector	Gavin Thomas
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	14 October 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 is a registered children's home for up to seven young people between the ages of 12 and 17 years. The home is owned by a local city council. It is a purpose built, two-storey building that opened in August 2001. The accommodation is spacious, well-maintained and provides appropriate accommodation for the young people living there. The home is located in its own grounds with parking at the front and an enclosed garden at the back. The home is in a busy residential area and there is easy access by public transport to the city.

Summary

This was an unannounced interim inspection. The focus of this inspection was to assess action taken in implementing the two recommendations from the previous inspection. The key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matters outcome 'staying safe' were also assessed. Staff support young people's safety, welfare and placement arrangements well. Staff are also effectively developing two key areas, a system for communicating with unaccompanied asylum seeking children and the implementation of procedural guidance when working with young people towards their independence skills. The types of behaviours often exhibited by young people are challenging and presents high risks to themselves and on occasions, their peers. However, staff work consistently with young people to minimise and prevent these behaviours from escalating. The atmosphere in the house is lively and young people are encouraged to participate in a range of meaningful activities.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, two recommendations were made. The registered person was asked to consider a system for consulting with parents about the quality of service. The registered person was also asked to consider improving the appearance of the premises to make it more homely. Both recommendations are still in the process of being implemented.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The home has a good system for promoting young people's privacy during particular activities such as bathing and showering. Dedicated rooms are also provided for enabling young people to have private meetings with staff or visitors.

The complaints procedure is accessible to young people. This enables young people to raise any complaints or concerns to a range of people independent to the home. Records show that complaints raised by young people are taken seriously and outcomes of investigations are provided to young people in writing. When complaints are linked to behavioural matters, such as young people complaining about their peers, these matters are addressed promptly. Young people say they would not hesitate to use the complaints procedure if they were not happy.

The safety of young people is given high priority at all times. Where appropriate, this includes joint working with external agencies. Young people say they feel safe living at this home. There are sufficient staff on duty at all times to support young people in a range of situations, some of which present high risks to young people. Staff regularly engage in frank discussions with young people about their safety and protection.

Bullying behaviours between young people are a current issue. Staff are taking the necessary action to prevent or discourage these behaviours. A high percentage of complaints made by young people since the last inspection are in relation to bullying behaviour by their peers. The strategies in place for countering bullying behaviours are monitored by staff for effectiveness.

Incidents relating to young people being absent from the home without authority are clearly documented. Records show that these incidents are communicated promptly with relevant professionals such as the police. Young people are encouraged to engage in dialogue with staff to speak about their safety and vulnerability when they fail to return home at the agreed times.

The approach towards behavioural management systems ensures that young people understand the consequences of unacceptable behaviours but to also celebrate good behaviours. For example, young people enjoy the benefits of an education rewards night out every week if they maintain good school attendance and behaviour. All forms of de-escalation and physical intervention are recorded in the restraint book. However, the pages of the current book being used are not numbered. Sanctions are imposed as a result of unacceptable behaviours and young people are given an opportunity to comment on these. On two occasions, the types of sanctions imposed were not judged appropriate. The Registered Manager has addressed this with the staff team to ensure that the consequences of unacceptable behaviours are reasonable.

Fire safety checks are carried regularly by visiting contractors. An up-to-date fire risk assessment is in place and indicates that fire procedures are safe. The two recommendations identified in the fire risk assessment are being addressed. Young people are involved in regular fire drills and the minimum number of drills are achieved in a twelve month period. In-house safety checks are carried out to ensure that the fire detection system is in good working order. However, the weekly testing of fire call points have lapsed in recent weeks.

The council has a safe recruitment process managed centrally. This ensures correct checks are made prior to any staff member starting work with young people. The personnel records are held at the central office and have been inspected by a colleague who judges the system as good.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

At the previous inspection, it was recommended that a system is put into place to formally consult with parents about the quality of the service and to evidence the outcomes and feedback from parents. This is work in progress. A new system is being devised to provide parents with regular updates about the young person's progress and well-being. A system to seek the views of parents about the care the young people receive is being considered for implementation.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

At the previous inspection, it was recommended that the home is decorated and furnished to create a more pleasant domestic environment. Some work has been undertaken to address this. As a result, young people's art is displayed on some walls. Further work is planned to improve the appearance of the home. This will include repairs to damaged walls, redecoration and additional pictures will also be hung in the hallways. The views of young people are mixed. One young person said they prefer the simplicity of the walls as they are.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
26	ensure that fire call points are tested at suitable intervals. (Reg 32-(1)(c)(v))	31 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the pages of the restraint book are numbered. (NMS 22.9)