

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC037984
Inspection date	22 June 2009
Inspector	Deborah White
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	14 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

This children's home provides care and accommodation for up to three children, of either sex, aged 12 years to 17 years old.

The home is made up of two floors with the ground floor having a toilet and shower room, a lounge with a television, a dining room with a computer and a kitchen.

The first floor includes bedrooms, a staff office and a bathroom. There is an enclosed back garden equipped with outdoor furniture and a barbeque.

There were three children present during this inspection.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced random inspection was to look at the action, and recommendations, from the last inspection and to review outcomes in staying safe. As issues around safeguarding children was identified during this visit; outcomes for organisation were inspected. Outcomes for being healthy; enjoying and achieving; positive contribution and economic wellbeing were not inspected. They will be reviewed at the next key inspection.

The home have not adequately managed bullying to ensure children are safe and feel secure. Staffing is not sufficient in number to meet the needs of children and monitoring, by the registered person, is not robust enough to promote positive outcomes for children.

Improved fire safety measures protects children, from the risk of fire, and how visitors are monitored safeguards children against potential abusers.

There are seven actions and ten recommendations arising from this visit.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered person was required to improve fire safety. Measures to keep children safe from fire, that include training and regular equipment checks, are in place so this action is met.

A recommendation to include all the required information in the Statement of Purpose is met so children, parents and placing authorities know what services to expect.

Individual risk assessments have not improved to fully reflect known risks so an action will be raised in this report.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Children have their own rooms, which they can secure but children's privacy is not always respected to maintain their dignity. Children enter each other's bedrooms, without permission, and remove personal items; sometimes destroying them.

Children are not always able to access independent help or advice if they wish. They are provided with a mobile telephone, and £5 a week top-up, but there is no telephone, in the children's home, where children can make, and receive, calls in private without having to ask staff.

It is not clear what arrangements are in place should a child either lose or damage their mobile telephone or how they can maintain telephone contact once they have used up their weekly top-up card.

Confidential records are kept in a lockable facility, to keep children's files private, but staff are not clear about the storage of and access to restricted, or private, information that may cause harm or distress to children.

Children are not adequately supported to make complaints. There is information available, to inform children about the home's complaint's procedure, but not all children have access to a person independent of the home to offer them help and advice.

The promotion of children's welfare is unsatisfactory. Significant bullying incidents have not been adequately responded to and where there was suspicion that a child was at risk from harm, by being threatened and intimidated, there were no child protection referrals made to ensure protection strategies were put in place.

There are no issues raised about children going missing at this inspection.

Managing physical restraints, on children, is unsatisfactory. Staff feel they do not receive the right training, to manage challenging behaviour, and single staff cover puts children and staff at risk should a physical intervention be required. Incidents where staff have intervened using a physical intervention have not been recorded, in the home's records, to ensure all incidents are appropriately handled and monitored by the registered person.

Children's risk assessments do not adequately reflect known risks and how children are to be safeguarded. For example, clear risks, such as children being bullied or putting themselves in risk situations, are not recorded in individual risk assessments and risk management strategies are vague and not specific to individual children.

Children are safeguarded by the home's visitor's policy. Unknown visitors to the home have their identification checked and a visitors book is signed so the registered person can monitor visitors to the home.

Records for persons working in the home are not always in place to ensure shift leaders know the skills, knowledge and experience of persons placed in charge of children.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The Statement of Purpose generally reflects the services offered but the home is not staffed in line with the staffing policy. The policy says that staffing levels will be increased to meet the needs of children living at the home but this is not evident at inspection.

There are arrangements in place to cover the absence of the manager but not all staff, who are placed in charge of the home, have substantial relevant experience of working at the home.

Arrangements to cover sickness and absence are unsatisfactory. The home has, on more than one occasion, been secured and left unoccupied by staff because shifts cannot be covered. Staffing levels do not safeguard children. Incidents have occurred where children have not been adequately supervised, and observed, and children have been advised to lock themselves in their bedroom to stay safe from bullying.

Changes to the staff team have impacted on continuity of care, for children, and the use of agency staff for single cover means children are being cared for by adults they do not know. Supervision records are not available to check new staff are being supported.

The home is not adequately monitored to safeguard children's welfare. Actions raised at this inspection have not been identified, or addressed, through regular monitoring and there is little evidence to show that children, and parents, are consulted about how the home operates.

All children have case files that are stored securely.

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
9	provide children with a telephone on which to make and receive telephone calls in private without reference to persons working at the home (Regulation 15 (4) (a))	31 August 2009
17	ensure that the children's home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (1) (a))	31 July 2009
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose that includes the information listed in this regulation (Regulation 17 (4))	31 July 2009

26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health and safety of children are identified and so far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23 (c))	31 July 2009
27	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4 and ensure they are kept up to date (Regulation 29 (1))	31 August 2009
30	ensure that there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the children's home (Regulation 25 (1) (a) and (b))	31 July 2009
33	establish and maintain a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home and provide for consultation with children, parents and placing authorities (Regulation 34 (1) (b) and (3)).	31 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure children's privacy is respected (NMS 9)
- provide procedural guidance on privacy and confidentiality that covers all the elements listed in this standard (NMS 9.2)
- ensure children know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy (NMS 16.1)
- ensure the welfare of children is promoted and there are systems in place to ensure children are protected from abuse, which are known and understood by staff (NMS 17)
- ensure children are protected from bullying (NMS 18)
- ensure the home has a written Statement of Purpose which accurately describes what the home sets out to do, for children (NMS 1.1)
- ensure there is a written record kept in the home that details the time, date and length of each supervision held for staff (NMS 28.3)
- ensure staff who are placed in charge of the home have substantial relevant experience of working in the home (NMS 29.3)
- make every effort to achieve continuity for staffing such that children's attachments are not overly disrupted and ensure no more than half the staff on duty are from an external agency (NMS 30.03)
- increase the number of staff looking after children to safeguard and promote the welfare of each child (NMS 30.4).