

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin
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Date of last inspection	30 October 2008
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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 is a semi detached Victorian building on the outskirts of a large city centre. The service provides care for up-to-four young people aged between 10 years and 17 years old. The home is registered to provide care to young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. All young people have their own bedroom on the first floor of the three storey building. There is a large garden that young people can use and the home is close to local amenities. The home is one of three homes owned and run by a private company.

Summary

This was a key unannounced inspection of the service to assess compliance with the national minimum standards for children's homes. The home was assessed under the headings of Every Child Matters. Being healthy, positive contribution, enjoying and achieving and economic wellbeing, organisation and staying safe received a judgement of satisfactory Overall the home was judged as satisfactory.

At the time of this inspection there were four young people accommodated at the home. Two young people were seen briefly during the inspection

A new registered care manager has been appointed and has made some very positive changes since his arrival. The home had been without a registered manager for some time and therefore shortfalls have been identified in training and staff supervision. There is also a shortage of permanent care staff and the home is currently recruiting. New staff are expected to start duties at the home very soon. Fire requirements were discussed and work is to be completed in the near future. All these issues will be checked on the next inspection.

Care files have all recently been completely reviewed , updated and show in detail how young people's identified needs are to be met. Staff morale is improving and those members of staff spoken to, stated that communication in the home is more effective and they were all looking forward to a more stable staff team with robust management strategies in place.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

One action made at the last inspection regarding fire precautions remains outstanding. Four recommendations made relating to written consent for first aid and medication, knocking on doors prior to entering young people's room, unreasonable sanctions and noting trends in poor behaviour have all been met.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people enjoy healthy nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. Young people have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals. The service promotes healthy choices and monitors the outcomes for young people in this area. Staff are proactive and show awareness in the area of good nutrition however, not all staff have undertaken basic food hygiene training.

Young people enjoy good physical, emotional and mental health. They are encouraged to lead healthy lifestyles, learn about sexual health and substance abuse. Young people live in a healthy environment and their health needs are identified and staff make sure services are provided to meet them. There are good systems to assess, plan and review young people's individual requirements. There is good up-to-date documentation that gives a clear picture of the practical way that staff support young people in keeping healthy. However, not all staff have undertaken first aid training.

Young people's welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicine and treatment. The receipt, storage, administration and disposal of medication is to a satisfactory standard. However, not all staff have undertaken medication administration training. There is minimal impact on young people in relation to staff training, as the registered manager confirmed that there is always a member of staff on duty with the appropriate level of training regarding basic food hygiene, first aid and the administering of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The home endeavour to protect young people and overall satisfactory practice is in place. However, not all procedures were in place to fully promote young people's physical safety.

Young people's physical safety may be compromised as staff do not always follow the home's fire procedures. The home's records show some fire drills have taken place but not to the required standard. The home's fire risk assessment is not reviewed annually and not all actions from a recent fire officer's visit have been addressed. These shortfalls do not ensure young people are always protected from the potential risk of fire.

Young people's rights to privacy are promoted and respected. There are policies and procedures in place to guide staff on how young people are to be treated to maintain their privacy and dignity. Young people have keys to their bedrooms and staff are expected to knock on bedroom doors before entering. Staff are careful about sharing confidential information and records. Information held on behalf of young people is correctly stored in lockable facilities which are only accessible to staff. Young people have access to a phone, they can make and receive private calls and there is sufficient space within the home to enable privacy with visitors.

The home's child protection policy includes all the elements listed in Standard 17 and is based on good practice. Copies of the local safeguarding board child protection procedures are available in the home. There are also safeguarding procedures in the home for young people placed out of county and staff confirmed that they were aware of the procedures to take in the event of any child protection issues. There are some shortfalls in staff training in safeguarding, however there is training planned in the near future to address this shortfall.

Young people know how to make a complaint to staff in the home and the staff team are proactive in ensuring young people's concerns are listened to. The complaints procedure and young person's guide also include the right for young people to make complaints to Ofsted and details how they may contact Ofsted. The written record of complaints includes the outcome and is monitored by the registered manager and the effectiveness of this monitoring is reflected in the regulation 34 audits. Complaints and safeguarding are appropriately managed and recorded.

The home's anti-bullying policy is accessible to all staff and young people. Young people's meetings are used to discuss the issue of bullying in the home and community. Written records of incidents of young people being absent without authority are detailed and clearly describe the actions taken by staff to safeguard a young person on return to the home. This practice promotes the protection of young people accommodated in the home.

Young people are encouraged to develop appropriate friendships, staff support and monitor their relationships as appropriate, to ensure young people are protected from potential abuse. Young people are made aware of their expected behaviour and know the consequences of poor behaviour. This is discussed at each key worker sessions and these are recorded in the young person's file. Staff are aware of the agreed measures they can use which are fair and in line with the young person's age and abilities. Behaviour is well managed in the home and expectations for young people are clear.

There is a system in place that records incidents of physical intervention and the use of positive consequences. Where physical intervention is used to prevent a young person from harm, the written record of events includes the presenting risk in that individual case, that lead staff to physically intervene. Individual risk assessments are in place, current and have been reviewed regularly. Records show that young people are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against records kept by the home. Restraints are well managed in the home.

All staff have up-to-date training in the use of physical intervention techniques and defusing difficult situations. Young people are being assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through the use of planned interventions. Placement plans and risk assessments identify strategies for example, to manage anger and there is evidence that the plans are followed. The organisation's recruitment systems ensure all staff satisfy the appropriate vetting checks prior to commencing work at the home. Therefore young people are protected from contact with unchecked adults.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Placement plans clearly detail the individual support in place for young people. Frequent one-to-one sessions

ensure young people are actively supported to develop and progress in key areas for example, life skills. Staff understand the need for young people to take some controlled risks and support such life sessions to encourage the responsibility essential to community membership. Formal assessments support this work and regular updates ensure these are current and individual. Young people are encouraged to share and talk about difficult issues in their lives. Staff provide sensitive guidance and support to young people for their emotional, health and well-being needs.

Two of the four young people currently do not have an ongoing educational placement and staff have worked hard to encourage further education and work opportunities for those who are above school leaving age. Young people are encouraged to make constructive use of leisure time and in-house and community activities are planned. Young people do not always want to participate and staff have to be ready to engage and suggest activities when opportunities arise.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's needs are assessed before they come to live at the home. Young people have good written placement plans that outline how their needs will be met and staff are committed to making sure these plans are implemented in ways that involve young people in thinking about their life and their future. Young people receive individual care and they know what their plan is and are encouraged to be involved with its implementation.

Regular key worker time is offered to young people to talk about their life and to review how things are going for them. Staff prioritise and promote these sessions even when young people do not want to co-operate. Young people in the home are appropriately placed there. Staff help young people to maintain constructive contact with families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. Staff show they are supportive and sensitive to any issues contact may raise for young people.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Senior staff ensure that the young person is able to visit the home and meet other young people and information is gained from all parties prior to admission. When admitted, the staff ensure they spend time in promoting good relationships with other young people in the home. When a young person is getting prepared to leave the home, staff ensure that the social workers and placing authority are fully informed of all current issues. Young people are offered advice and support which may include a visit to their next placement. Young people have a clear voice in the home. Staff encourage them to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people receive care and support that helps them to prepare for adulthood. There is constructive practical support for independence. Young people do not always want to engage in plans for independence and staff make sure that they step in to care when young people do not take care of themselves. Young people are supported to be sensible with their finances. Staff support the young people to shop and cook for themselves, ensure that they are provided with appropriate clothing and toiletries to move on into semi or independent living. The staff also provide opportunities to visit the young person to offer any additional support through this transitional period.

The house is fit for its purpose as a home for four young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people have homely accommodation, decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard, providing adequate facilities for their use.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The individual needs of young people are addressed well in terms of the direct care they receive from staff. The overall promotion of equality and diversity issues is not sufficiently understood by the staff. Following discussion with several members of staff it was determined that their understanding of equality was reasonable but was generally limited to culture, sexuality, race and physical disabilities. The

staffs' knowledge of diversity is limited and training is not currently offered in this area but is planned.

Young people are cared for by a core staff team who are fully trained and skilled. However, additional relief staff have not completed their National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People affecting the overall 80% required by standards. New staff receive a comprehensive induction.

Supervision levels are not currently meeting the standards confirmed by discussion with staff and the supervision index. Staff report that while there are sufficient numbers of staff on duty each shift this is difficult to maintain during any sickness and involves current staff working extra hours. At the present time sickness and vacancies are covered either by the home's staff changing shifts or undertaking more hours. In addition staff from other homes in the company support some shifts. Staff state that agency staff are not used which does ensure continuity for young people. Suitable arrangements are in place for out of hours support for staff. The manager is seeking to address staff shortfalls and is currently recruiting new staff to cover vacancies. There is no evidence the staffing difficulties have impacted upon the quality of care from this inspection.

Staff development is low on the agenda but following discussion with the area manager this will be a priority once the home has a full complement of staff. There are training events arranged in the near future.

The home's Statement of Purpose provides an accurate account of the home's function. The number, relevant qualifications and experience of persons working at the home is currently being updated. A very good young person's guide is available and details what facilities are available in the home and what young people can expect. Both documents meet requirements outlined in the national minimum standards.

The rota in place provides adequate time for handover notes to be discussed at handover in the evening but this is due to be increased to allow more time for communication at the change over to day staff. The children's workforce development council induction programme is currently being undertaken by the home's two new members of care staff. The area manager from the company undertakes monthly Regulation 33 visits, which identify any shortfalls and details how shortfalls are to be addressed. Therefore there is satisfactory monitoring in place.

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
31	demonstrate arrangements have been made to ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training, with specific reference to training in equality and diversity, basic food	28 February 2010

	hygiene, child protection, first aid and safety with medicines (Regulation 27(4)(a))	
31	demonstrate arrangements have been made to ensure that all persons employed by him receive appropriate training, with specific reference to training in Level 3 of the Caring for Children and Young People NVQ Regulation (27(4)(a))	29 April 2010
28	ensure all staff working at the home receive regular recorded supervision that meets all the criteria set out in Standard 28.4 (Regulation (27) (4))	29 January 2010
26	ensure, by means of fire drills and practices at suitable intervals, that the persons working at the home and, so far as practicable are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire (Regulation 32 (e))	29 January 2010
26	ensure the home has a current fire risk assessment in place and that this is reviewed annually. Ensure all recommendations made by the fire safety officer are addressed (Regulation 32 (1))	10 February 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.