

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	2 March 2010
Inspector	Elaine Clare
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	2 April 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 house is operated by a county council social services, children and families service. It offers short term respite care breaks, for children who have severe learning or physical disabilities and significant communication difficulties. A maximum of 10 children can be accommodated at any one time. Their ages range from 5 years old up to 17 years old.

The home is purpose built. It is a single storey building on a site adjacent to a school for children with special educational needs. The home has been adapted to meet the needs of children with physical disabilities and provides specialist equipment, to help meet the needs of children accommodated.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection. Three recommendations have been made as a result of the inspection. The one recommendation resulting from the last inspection was revisited.

Young people have their health needs assessed and met to a good standard. Robust and reviewed policies and procedures and appropriately trained staff enable young people to stay in an environment where they feel safe. Avenues exist for young people to have a voice about their life at the setting, their views and opinions and their futures lives. The home is well maintained and suitable for its purpose. The management and whole staff team are professional, calm and fully committed to the care of the young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the interim inspection in April 2009 there was one recommendation made; to improve the children's guide. This has been completed to an excellent standard and the provision offers a choice of guides to parents and children that most suit their needs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are offered a varied and nutritious diet that they have an active voice in choosing. Staff are encouraging and supportive in assisting young people in life skills such as preparing meals. Food budgets are good, enabling staff to provide a good standard of food provision. Mealtimes are seen as an opportunity to be enjoyable social occasions. Fresh fruit and vegetables are always available. Catering staff are trained in food hygiene and handling.

Young people have their health needs identified and addressed in accordance with the setting's health care and care delivery policy. Individual health care plans are subject to regular reviews and close monitoring by the manager. Health needs which may impact on young people's future are also identified and addressed, for example, physical and mental health. Staff demonstrated a very sensitive, caring and confident approach to individual health issues young people have. Staff promote safe and healthy lifestyles by encouraging young people to exercise and choose healthy snack options. First aid boxes are kept and staff have received training in first aid. Records for accidents are clear and well maintained.

The home has an effective medication policy in place and ensures practices around storage, administration, recording, and disposal are sound. Young people receive medication from staff who are trained to do so competently. All records are well maintained with no errors seen. Consents for the administration of first aid and non prescribed medicines are in place for all young people. Clear and sound systems are in place for young people to self administer medication and also for the administration of controlled medicines, should the need arise. All medicines are stored safely and securely.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff show a high regard to privacy and for maintaining appropriate levels of confidentiality as is consistent with good parenting. Staff confirm that they respect young people's space. Staff were observed respecting young peoples privacy and dignity. For example, by standing outside the bathroom door.

Young people, staff and others are able to make a complaint through the setting's robust complaints procedure. Records show all complaints are dealt with by the manager or provider in a professional and timely manner. There have been no complaints made to Ofsted about this service.

Young people are cared for by staff who receive appropriate training in child protection and safeguarding. This includes the home's and local authority's protocols in identifying and responding to child protection concerns or incidents. Staff receive yearly refresher training while new staff cover safeguarding in their induction. Procedural guidance for staff clearly demonstrates the systems required in order to protect children and minimise the risk of abuse while young people are living in the house. Parents state they feel safe leaving their child at the home. Staff give the young people much support to enable them to keep safe when out in the community.

Bullying is taken seriously with risk assessments identifying any concerns. Bullying is covered in key worker sessions and house meetings. Relationships between the staff and current young people are good with mutual respect for each other. There is no current concern around bullying in the home. The staffing levels are high which decreases the likelihood of bullying taking place. Staff are aware of the group dynamics in the home and manage the young people's interactions well.

Young people are helped to develop socially accepted behaviour with constructive staff response to incidents. Risk assessments identify potential risky behaviour relating to areas such as running away, aggressive behaviour, free time and activities. Behaviour management strategies are based on positive handling and diffusion. The home has a range of agreed sanctions that the manager closely monitors to ensure consistency and appropriateness; however this is not monitored by the regulation 33 visitor. Records show low numbers of sanctions and physical interventions recorded. All staff are trained in physical intervention techniques. The home has use of two purpose built containment spaces within the young people's bedrooms. These are designed to keep young people safe in times of crisis. They are used frequently. Written guidance for staff on the use of the areas has not been developed. Staff base their behaviour management on active encouragement, acceptable behaviour and positive relationships with the young people.

The health and safety of all those who work and live at the home is addressed well. The regular testing, checking and servicing of all fire fighting, gas and electrical equipment and appliances ensure the setting is safe. Risk assessments for areas such as kitchen appliances, barbeques and smoking are in place and of a very good standard. Young people and staff experience regular fire evacuation practices and are well informed of the procedure if a fire was to start.

Robust procedures are in place to ensure only suitable staff are employed. Files evidenced that staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks and the standards for safe recruitment are met. All visitors are vetted, supervised if appropriate and asked to sign the visitor's book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people's individual needs are seen as paramount. Staff provide good levels of individual support and are positive about the outcomes this enables them to achieve. Young people's placement plans identify how support will be provided. The home has sought links with a wide range of other professionals and similar services that fit with the needs of young people. Staff appear confident in managing a wide range of needs. For example, emotional difficulties, behavioural difficulties, fears, relationships and communication. A key working process is in place to ensure young people, alongside their parents, have regular opportunities to discuss their care plans. Young people are given opportunities to voice their wishes, concerns and aspirations.

The young people are encouraged by staff to take part in leisure activities both inside and outside of the home. Young people confirmed they have a voice in choosing and suggesting leisure activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have a robust assessment of their needs and thorough placement plans that identify how their needs will be met. A structured review process continually assesses young people's needs throughout the placement to ensure positive outcomes are achievable. However, the minutes of these reviews are not held on the young person's file. Young people are encouraged to make a positive contribution about their present needs, the way the home is run and their future. They can achieve this through regular placement reviews and key worker sessions. All recording is of a good standard with close monitoring by the manager.

Contact details are clearly outlined in individual care files. Staff support young people to maintain contact with family, friends and significant others during their short stay at the home.

Young people are supported in moving in and leaving the home. Excellent information is given to young people before they arrive at the setting so they know what to expect. They are given much support to enable them to move into the adult service with confidence when they get to 18 plus. The home works very closely with social workers to ensure the correct timing and support is given to the young person. The setting's admission policy covers all aspects of planned admissions plus emergency placements.

Young people have opportunities to discuss the running of the home and to voice their opinions and views. Young people's meetings and key worker sessions are held regularly to provide the

young people with the opportunity to express their views. Young people using the service are on the panel of the grant support scheme. One parent wrote that her son is 'well cared for and it's a great opportunity for him to spend time with other teenagers. I'm very happy with the service.'

Relationships between staff and young people are very good. These are based on mutual respect, understanding and clear professional and personal boundaries. Young people genuinely like the staff and feel very easy in their presence. One parent wrote 'there is always a warm welcome'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Good procedures are in place for young people as they approach adulthood. This includes liaising with social workers on the adult team and contributing to pathway plans or leaving care plans. The manager is fully committed to ensuring young people have a smooth transition into adult care.

The home provides a good standard of accommodation throughout. Decoration is good and modern. Suitable toilet and bathing facilities are provided together with ample communal space, a lounge, games room and dining room. The garden is maintained to a good standard. Young people are able to keep to the same rooms when they come into the home. A tour of the home found no immediate health or safety concerns.

The home's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose and function. It serves the needs of the young people it accommodates and provides an environment that is supportive to each child's development.

It is situated in a location that takes into account transport, education, health, leisure and employment facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of young people at the home are properly considered in relation to religion and cultural needs together with health and dietary needs. Recruitment procedures ensure staff are recruited fairly and without discrimination.

The home's Statement of Purpose is clear in setting the aims and objectives of the home and how they are to be provided. However it does not include all areas specified in the children's homes regulations. The ethos of the home is to provide young people a place for growth, development and independence. Young people are given an excellent children's guide that is comprehensive and clearly states what they can expect and what is expected of them.

Young people benefit from a stable staff team consisting of experienced staff who are all fully supported by the manager and other senior staff in the organisation. A good induction programme is offered to newly recruited staff with continued training after this period. Staff receive regular supervision which is of a good standard. Staff also say that they feel well supported. A satisfactory ratio of staff to young people is in place to ensure good levels of

support and individual attention for young people. Staff undertake mandatory training throughout the year plus other appropriate training as identified such as refresher courses in positive behaviour management and physical interventions.

The manager clearly places the needs of the young people first, displaying a sound understanding of all areas of care being provided at the home. There is a clear commitment to supporting both young people and staff. She is always professional and gains much respect from other professionals she has contact with. Staff and young people are very complimentary about the management of the home. Young people have good relationships with staff who set firm and professional boundaries. Good monitoring systems are in place carried out by the manager and regulation 33 visitor at very regular intervals. Young people's case files are stored in a secure cabinet and are arranged in a manner that makes them readily useable by staff. All records are well maintained.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure the regulation 33 visitor monitors and records any comments on the appropriateness of sanctions (NMS 22.11)
- develop a policy on the use and techniques of other physical interventions, and the circumstance in which they may be used (NMS 22.8)
- provide the result of all statutory reviews on the child's file. (NMS 3.4)