

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Anthony Kyem
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Date of last inspection	28 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

The home is a local authority run children's home which provides care and accommodation for up to three young people of either sex between the ages of 11 to 17 years. The home is a semi property situated on a terraced row of houses. There are no distinguishing features to suggest that the home is a children's home. The home is situated on a major bus route therefore is accessible to local shopping and leisure facilities.

Summary

The inspection of the home was unannounced. All key National Minimum Standards were inspected. Staff and one resident young person were present and contributed towards this inspection.

The home is a good service and good work has been undertaken to improve the home's performance. The home provides young people with a safe, secure and stable environment, which young people respond towards positively.

Young people value their relationships with staff and speak highly of the support provided to them. Staff are suitably trained to promote young people's health, welfare and safety. All staff have completed mandatory training and this includes training on child protection and first aid.

There are a number of improvements being made to the design and layout of the home. The work is being completed to improve the cosmetic and physical appearance of the home.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Significant improvements have been made and there are no outstanding requirements resulting from the previous inspection.

Staff are now receiving relevant training in accordance with the work they perform. Such training enables staff to undertake their duties more effectively and safely. For example, all staff have now completed training in first aid, food hygiene, safe handling of medication, care and control and child protection.

Recording systems have also improved. This means that young people's individual records are now updated and reviewed at suitable intervals. Building risk assessments are now up to date and fire safety checks are undertaken at suitable intervals.

Staff now have their individual performance supported through supervision. They receive good support to enable them to do their jobs more effectively. Managerial monitoring systems now occur within the recommended timescales, so that the performance of the home is routinely monitored to ensure a smooth operation.

Young people's food preferences are now considered so that they enjoy the extensive range of foods provided for them. Young people are provided with more frequent opportunities to participate in recreational activities of their choice.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The procedures for the administration, safe handling, storage and recording of young people's medication are managed well. Action is taken to ensure that young people receive medical treatment where required. Suitable provisions are available for the administration of first aid and all staff are trained to administer emergency treatment safely.

Young people are all registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and they are actively encouraged by staff to attend their routine medical appointments at suitable intervals. Specialist support is provided for those young people who require it, for example, therapists to promote young people's emotional health. Staff are able to offer young people sound advice on the dangers associated with abusing alcohol. This means that young people are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own health needs and welfare.

Foods prepared for young people take account of their individual food preferences, including any cultural or specific dietary needs. Staff also ensure that the foods provided for young people are nutritionally balanced. Themed cultural events are held for young people to experience different foods from other people's cultures, for example, Chinese and Nigerian themed celebrations have both taken place.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Good systems are in place to protect young people from harm. Such systems cover child protection, permissible forms of control, unauthorised absence, complaints and bullying. All staff are familiar with these procedures. The use of physical intervention is rare and testament to the positive relationships that exist between young people and staff.

Rewards, incentives and praise are all used effectively by staff, to encourage young people to behave in a socially acceptable way. However, some sanctions used by staff, whilst fairly applied are used to often resulting in sanctions being less effective in practice. Consequently, young people may continue to exhibit the same behaviours, with little regard for the consequences imposed. In this regard, sanctions are not creatively used.

Currently, there is only one young person resident and they were able to confirm there are no issues with bullying within this home. Records held in respect of complaints, sanctions, restraints and unauthorised absence were all clearly recorded and demonstrative of the measures taken by staff to promote young people's welfare and safety. No complaints and only one recorded absence were recorded.

Health and safety matters are managed well. Safety tests have been undertaken to the home's gas, fire fighting equipment and portable electrical appliances within the recommended timescales. Routine fire drills and tests are undertaken, however, staff have not undertaken fire awareness training for some time to enhance their awareness and knowledge on fire prevention. A recent visit by the local fire authority confirmed that the home's fire safety systems are broadly complaint and suitably maintained.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people feel well supported and valued by staff. Their emotional health needs are promoted and specialist services are sought to help them where required. Young people have designated workers with whom they are able to discuss their concerns, thoughts or feelings. Key workers take responsibility for overseeing young people's placements plans to ensure these meet young people's changing needs and personal circumstances. Staff facilitate individualised work with young people to explore their progress, difficulties or concerns.

Young people are actively encouraged to attend school so that they have the opportunity to learn, achieve and develop their academic potential. Personal education plans are inclusive of young people's educational needs, aspirations and achievements. Laptop computers are provided for every child to assist them in study and the completion of their homework. Education is positively promoted by staff.

Within the home, there is a wide range of board games for young people to use and enjoy. There are also a range of leisure opportunities provided for young people, for example, planned holidays and visits to theme parks and weekly activities of interest. Young people say they enjoy the new range of activities and confirm that activities are now provided more often.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs appropriately assessed and reviewed. The young person resident, for example, has signed their residential placement plan and is clearly involved in their statutory review meetings. This enables them to have a say in any important decisions made about their future. Contact with family and friends is encouraged and young people are actively supported to maintain their family links.

Young people are involved in the running of the home and their views are listened to and valued. Good opportunities are provided for young people to be consulted. There are regular key working sessions and children's meetings provided for such purposes. No new admissions to the home have occurred since the home's previous inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is midway through the process of complete redecoration and refurbishment. The work is in progress in preparation for planned changes to the home's purpose and function. A new bathroom suite has been fitted and a new dining area is being created to offer young people accommodation that is more spacious. The new dining area will improve the current provisions for staff and young people to share meals together.

Since the last inspection, the home's gardens have been tended to and overgrown trees have been cut back. Currently, there is lots of building activity-taking place within the home to improve the standard of decorative repair and provide additional space and storage. The home is reasonably decorated but will require further redecoration following completion of the planned work.

None of the young people are of the required age where they are ready or prepared to begin working towards their independence. Young people are however encouraged to be more independent to enhance their basic independence skills.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a written statement of purpose together with a children's guide to the home. Both documents have been recently updated to include all of the required information. For example, the home's current conditions of registration are now included in the statement and the guide now contains the contact details of Ofsted, so that young people are able to raise their concerns or complaints independently.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good and young people are valued by staff. The composition of staff is diverse and this provides young people with positive role models. Young people are encouraged to respect themselves and others and are provided with the same equality of opportunity.

The provisions available for staff training, supervision and leadership have all improved since the home's previous inspection. This means that staff now have access to more frequent training opportunities and receive better management support. Supervision of staff's individual practice, for example, now takes place within the recommended timescales.

The home is being managed temporarily in the Registered Manager's absence by another Registered Manager. This arrangement is set to become permanent in accordance with strategic management plans for this home. The quality of care is routinely monitored and reviewed so that identified weaknesses or shortfalls are rectified to ensure the smooth operations of the home.

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
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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 use and effectiveness of sanctions are routinely monitored and reviewed (NMS 22.6)
- ensure staff receive fresher training in fire safety (NMS 26.1)
- ensure that the home is redecorated following completion of the planned refurbishment (NMS 24.1)