

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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Date of last inspection	12 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 is a children's home which is owned and managed by a local authority. The house is situated in a residential area. The town centre and its amenities, which include a cinema, sports centre, park and library, are a short bus ride away.

One of the key objectives of the home is to provide individually tailored care plans to support and help prepare young people for moving on to semi/independent living.

All young people are accommodated in single bedrooms and benefit from adequate living space and a large rear garden, which young people help to maintain.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is an outstanding service. Young people's welfare is a top priority and this is enhanced by the warm relationships that exist between young people and staff. Young people engage in a wide range of activities which are exciting and purposeful. This benefits their emotional wellbeing and provides opportunities for developing their independence skills. Significant work is undertaken with external agencies to promote young people's safety and in order to meet their full range of assessed needs. The manager and staff are committed to undertaking new initiatives for developing the service and for ensuring that young people's experience of this service is positive.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The registered manager was asked to introduce a reporting system in respect of the quality assurance and monitoring system. This is now in place including specified timescales for achieving identified targets.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Excellent opportunities are in place for ensuring that young people are consulted on dietary preferences and menus. Young people also benefit from opportunities to prepare meals with or without assistance. Records relating to menu planning and food served are comprehensive and evaluative. Meals are served in pleasant surroundings with adequate facilities for young people and staff to share meals together.

Effective procedures are in place for supporting young people to access relevant health services. This includes planned and emergency treatments and extensive work undertaken with health professionals. Arrangements for young people continuing existing health treatments are promoted and supported. Young people's health needs are well documented and where appropriate include robust risk assessments.

Thorough procedures are in place for the safe storage and administration of medication. Supporting evidence such as consent forms, medication administration records and records for the disposal of medication are meticulous. Staff attend various levels of medication training.

This is repeated at regular intervals. Where possible and appropriate, young people are encouraged to manage their own medication. This is supported through vigorous risk management processes.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Provisions for ensuring young people's privacy and confidentiality are realistic and achievable. Adequate facilities are provided for the storage of confidential information and procedures are in place for enabling young people to access relevant information regarding their care and welfare. Young people are accommodated in single bedrooms and ample space is provided for facilitating private conversations with young people and their visitors.

Young people are supported to express their concerns and opinions through a well managed complaints procedure. The complaints procedure is accessible in a range of documents including the young people's welcome pack and Statement of Purpose. The types and outcomes of complaints are monitored via the quality assurance system.

Robust procedures are in place for promoting young people's safety and welfare. Young people say they feel safe at the home and this includes their relationships with staff. The quality of work undertaken with safeguarding professionals and other agencies, such as the police, is exemplary. This is evidenced through clear and concise record keeping. Staff are kept abreast of safeguarding practices by attending relevant training. Procedures for monitoring and evaluating young people's safety and protection are wide ranging. This includes daily reviews, work undertaken by key workers, effective care planning and consultation with parents and professionals. Prompt action is taken to inform relevant professionals and parents regarding safeguarding issues.

Young people benefit immensely from an environment where bullying is not tolerated. Significant work is undertaken with young people on a regular basis including weekly discussions to explore and consult on behaviours, feelings and relationships within the home. Consultation includes input from external professionals and organisations.

Prompt action is taken in response to young people who are absent from care without authority. This includes liaison with parents and professionals, such as social workers, schools and the police. Records of all incidents of absconding are detailed with evidence of actions taken during the period of absence and following a young person's return.

Behavioural management procedures are constructive and in keeping with approved methods of intervention. Restraint and other forms of physical intervention have not been used for a considerable period of time. Staff are persistent in promoting socially acceptable behaviours with young people. This is achieved in a number of ways including transparent and meaningful conversations, group support and restorative processes. Where appropriate, sanctions are imposed or comments made in the sanctions record where young people may have behaved or acted inappropriately. The term 'staff disapproval' is frequently used as a reason for imposing a sanction although it does not always appear to be relevant to the behaviour.

Robust health and safety systems are maintained for keeping young people, staff and visitors safe from the risk of fire and other hazards. Fire safety procedures are kept up to date and include frequent fire drills and routine safety checks. Risk management processes are wide

ranging although the recording and accessibility are not always consistent. Routine safety checks are maintained and kept up to date. This includes gas, electrical and water safety checks. Staff have attended a wide range of health and safety training including food hygiene, first aid and risk management. A recent food hygiene inspection indicates that the premises are low risk.

Young people's safety and protection are enhanced through vigorous recruitment and selection procedures. Advanced safety checks are carried out prior to newly appointed staff taking up post. These include Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and references. Young people contribute to recruitment and selection processes. In doing so, their views and opinions of potential candidates are considered.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The quality of support offered to young people is exceptional. This is provided consistently and professionally. Young people respond positively to the varying types of support which are often in response to matters of a very sensitive nature. In addition to staff and keyworkers, young people can access the support of professionals independent to the home.

Young people's education is actively promoted in accordance with their assessed needs and care plans. Information relating to young people's education is maintained to a very high level. On site facilities are provided for home tuition and study. In addition to supporting school placements, staff work extensively with young people to engage them in further education provisions and work experience placements. External education professionals say that the home does exceedingly well in enabling young people to reach their potential.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's needs are assessed effectively and comprehensively. Placement plans are written to a very high standard. Young people are encouraged to contribute and comment on the content of their care plans. There are clear links between young people's placement plans and associated records such as daily logs and observation records. Young people's placement plans exceed the criteria as set out under National Minimum Standard 2.1 and include short term goals, risk management and a clear focus on independence training. Weekly plans are reviewed consistently for effectiveness.

Staff contribute effectively to young people's reviews including written reports produced by key workers. Young people are encouraged to comment on reports written for their reviews. In addition, they are encouraged and supported to complete other relevant documentation and to attend their reviews.

Well established procedures are in place for supporting young people before, during and after contact visits. These visits vary in accordance with agreements at the start of young people's placements. Good quality records of contact visits are maintained.

Procedures for introducing young people to the home are well managed and resourced. Young people are given the opportunity to visit the home prior to admission. The needs of the young person concerned and the existing group are all considered as part of this process. Procedures

for young people moving on are structured and carefully planned. Although housing implications are often a barrier to this process, efforts are made to ensure that the closure of a young person's placement is a positive experience. Outstanding work is achieved in providing various levels of outreach support for young people who have moved on. This includes direct work, telephone conversations and young people returning to the home for social visits.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Outstanding preparatory work is undertaken with young people to accomplish the required skills in readiness for moving on to semi or independent living. In addition to the implementation of pathway plans, young people are actively involved in other aspects of this process devised in accordance with their assessed needs. The use of a self-contained (semi-independence) flat is highly valued by young people as part of their preparation for moving on. Staff are highly trained and supported in their role in preparing young people for independence. A document titled 'Preparing for adulthood and independence' is produced by the home specifically for use by young people.

The quality of young people's accommodation is maintained to a very high standard including cleanliness, quality of furniture and fixtures and presentation. Young people are consulted on colour schemes and furniture. They are also encouraged to personalise and care for their bedrooms. Young people continue to enjoy the benefits of a well maintained rear garden. Staff sleeping-in rooms are separate to communal living areas. Resources and adequate space are provided for young people to pursue hobbies and interests.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

A well written Statement of Purpose is in place which clearly sets out the home's aims and objectives. This document is reviewed annually. A guide is included in the welcome pack which is issued to young people prior to or on admission. This pack contains a wealth of information including the anti bullying policy, information on health and advocacy and working towards independence.

Young people continue to benefit from the support of a staff team who are consistent, highly skilled and experienced. There are clear arrangements in place for staff deputising in the absence of the registered manager. These staff have relevant supervisory experience. The registered manager is suitably qualified and has substantial experience. The manager and staff are accessible to young people which creates a highly respected culture of openness and transparency.

Young people are cared for by staff who are committed to professional development. The induction for newly appointed staff is comprehensive and in keeping with external initiatives such as the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) standards. On-going training for all staff is wide ranging and includes a combination of in-house training, statutory training and opportunities to undertake professionally recognised qualifications. The quality of tracking and recording of training undertaken by staff is excellent. This includes individual training profiles, evidence of training undertaken and evaluation.

Robust systems are in place for monitoring the performance of the home against its Statement of Purpose and outcomes for young people. This is supported through the implementation of

a comprehensive development plan and on-going consultation with young people about the provisions of service and monthly visits carried out by the registered provider. New initiatives are being considered for evaluating the service such as formal consultation with external professionals and parents. Vigorous processes are in place for monitoring matters as required under Schedule 6 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

Young people's assessed needs are recorded in compliance with Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential files are stored securely and accessible to young people in accordance with legal requirements and local authority procedures.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Opportunities are created for enabling young people to expand their knowledge on food and diet. This includes menu planning, shopping and cooking. Young people are also given opportunities to experience foods from different cultures. Young people are safeguarded in accordance with assessed needs and identified risks which may impact on their wellbeing. Support systems are tailored and prioritised accordingly. Young people benefit immensely from the input of a staff team who are professional in their approach and ensure that young people's rights and decisions made about their lives are communicated effectively. The quality of care and support for preparing young people for independence is exemplary and where appropriate includes outreach support once they have moved on. Diversity and non-discriminatory practice are evident in key aspects of the service such as assessment of young people and recruitment of staff.

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):

- review the use of the term 'staff disapproval' currently being used in the sanctions record (NMS 22)
- review the recording and accessibility of risk management processes. (NMS 26)