

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	16 September 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 home provides care and accommodation for up to six children and young people of either sex, aged six years to 11 years of age. The home is close to local amenities and public transportation is easily accessible from the home. The home is well resourced with a communal lounge, games room, dining area, kitchen, utility room and outdoor play area.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection. The purpose of the visit is to assess how the home is meeting the national minimum standards and Children's Home Regulations. All of the key standards were assessed.

Young people are positive about the home and the staff working with them, they are making good progress and the home has some outstanding features. The home is making very good progress, and has met almost all of the requirements and recommendations made at the time of the last inspection. The management and staff have worked hard to raise the standards within the home and ensure that they provide sufficient evidence that this is the case.

Concerns have been raised in respect of complaints and investigation outcomes, to ensure that they are recorded and outcomes are timely. In addition the Regulation 34 checks needs further improvement to demonstrate that shortfalls are being identified and rectified. Additional information needs to be obtained so that the home can demonstrate safe staff recruitment in all cases.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the time of the last inspection three requirements were issued in relation to: replacing fire doors, this has been addressed; staff recruitment information, which has been partially addressed; and providing a telephone for the young people to use, without reference to staff in the home. All young people who are not subject to supervised contact now have their own mobile telephones, provided by the home.

A number of recommendations were also issued many have been fully addressed.

Staying safe:

These were in respect of all staff respecting children's privacy in practice; children now report that this is the case. That young people have safe storage in their rooms for their personal possessions; lockable storage has now been provided. That complaints are addressed without delay and young people are aware of the outcome; this has been partially addressed. That there is thorough risk assessment in relation to any bullying; good risk assessments are now in place. In addition, that the records of sanctions and restraint contain more detail; this has also been partially addressed.

Enjoying and achieving:

That all young people have a personal education plans (PEP) on their files; all PEPs are now on file.

Making a Positive Contribution:

Young people should know the outcome of their reviews and what their care plan is; recorded key worker sessions now demonstrate that this has been addressed. The local authority complete records of risk assessment and compatibility when considering new admissions to the home.

Organisation:

A clear system is currently being revised to identify any shortfalls when monitoring records. The staffing section of the Statement of Purpose has been updated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs. They have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals. The home provides a nutritious balanced diet for the young people. There are excellent records of menus that demonstrate that this is the case. The menus are based upon the 'healthy homes' which focuses upon fresh produce prepared from basic ingredients. When young people have an alternative meal to the one provided, this is clearly recorded.

The young people report that the home does not have fizzy drinks, crisps or biscuits, they buy sweet treats out of their pocket money. Sweet foods in the home are provided for through ample quantities and varieties fruit, which is freely available. Young people are encouraged to try food from different cultures and have been involved in themed nights to celebrate festivals. All staff have undertaken food hygiene training.

The home has clear health plans in place for all of the young people. They are encouraged and supported to attend routine appointments and are registered with health services including dentist, G.P and opticians. Specialised services are available and staff have engaged in these to support young people with particular health matters. The home has access to the looked after children nurse, which has been helpful in addressing health matters. Young people live in a healthy environment and their health needs are identified, services are provided to meet them, and their good health is promoted.

All of the young people have been encouraged to go to 'fit for fun', which is a fitness club including access to gym equipment, with some success. Young people are always encouraged to take an interest in looking after their health and to lead healthy lives. The promotion of a healthy lifestyle is successfully integrated into how the home operates.

Children's health needs are met very well, their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment. The records of medication are always up-to-date. Storage of medication is also good. Written consent to medical treatment is contained within young people's files. All staff have undertaken first aid training and are familiar with the individual needs of the young people placed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is maintained and they report that this is the case. Staff do not enter young people's bedrooms without their permission unless there are clear grounds to do so under the homes room search policy. There have been a number of searches conducted; the home maintains records of them which demonstrate that they have been proportionate. Information is securely stored and handled in a confidential manner.

There is a clear complaints procedure in place. Young people know how to complain and who to. Records of complaints demonstrate that the home tries to resolve matters swiftly. A recent complaint made by a young person is not included in the complaints record, however, the manager does have the details and has received a written outcome on the day of this visit. It is not clear how complaints are monitored if they are not included in the dedicated record.

All staff have undertaken training in safeguarding. Staff are clear about their responsibilities to report any incidents thorough the local authority's whistle blowing policy. They are also aware of indicators of abuse, recognising and responding to any matters. The home regularly liaises with the Local Safeguarding Children Board and copies of safeguarding procedures are available in the home.

There are good risk assessment in place in relation to any bullying. Staff are aware of the dynamics of the resident group of young people and any incidents are openly discussed. Key worker sessions are also undertaken around bullying issues. Additional training has also been provided by the equalities officer; staff say this was positive and helpful.

There have been a number of absences and these are recorded. Each young person has a good risk assessment in place which outlines what action staff should take in these circumstances. The home has policies and procedures in place for dealing with absence without authority. Work has been undertaken with younger children about stranger danger, becoming familiar with the area and keeping safe.

All young people have behaviour management plans and behaviour is regularly discussed in key worker sessions. The home has worked hard to demonstrate to provide evidence that behaviour is managed in a positive manner. Emphasis is placed upon rewarding and promoting positive behaviour. The home maintains records of sanctions and restraint and sanctions have reflective account of their effectiveness, however, this is not always the case with restraint. Currently the staff undertaking the restraint are assessing the effectiveness of interventions. It is not clear in the records that the manager is assessing the interventions and there are gaps in the records. These shortfalls have not been identified or rectified.

The home maintains good records of risk assessments in relation to the building, young people's activities and equipment. There are regular checks of fire equipment and weekly checks of exits emergency lighting and the alarm system. There is also an up-to-date fire risk assessment in place. New fire doors, which were required by the fire authority, have been fitted. No hazards were identified during the course of this visit.

Since the time of the last inspection the manager has worked hard to obtain information required by regulation for all employees working in the home, including casual staff. Files inspected

were orderly and accessible. Shortfalls were identified in respect of proof of identification. The system for obtaining information in respect of employment histories has improved, staff are asked to provide this information, but the manager has not seen the initial application forms to confirm that the information is complete.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All of the young people have access to very good individualised and where necessary specialised support. There is a lot of excellent evidence to demonstrate that key workers are undertaking good work during the sessional time dedicated to individual young people. There has been some brilliant feedback from other professionals who are also supporting the young people. The children's rights officer has contact with the home and all young people have placing social workers and contact with their families.

There is an education policy that shows how the home intends to promote and support the educational attainment of young people throughout the time they live there. This includes supporting the child by facilitating their prompt arrival at school with the necessary school equipment. Staff are very proactive in their approach to encouraging, enabling and facilitating young people's educational attainment. Education is viewed as very important and this is part of the overall ethos of the home. Some great work has been undertaken to ensure that young people who have previously refused education are now enjoying and achieving.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The home has excellent placement plans which give a clear overview of the day-to-day needs of individual young people. Staff and young people contribute to these plans and are familiar with them. The placement plans are comprehensive, consistent with the local authority care plans and are subject to regular review.

Young people are consulted about their care and involved in statutory review meetings. Key worker sessions prepare young people for their meetings and key workers attend and advocate on behalf of individual young people, should they need it. Young people are involved in the reports prepared by the home. The home takes minutes of the meeting so that issues can be swiftly addressed, where necessary and the local authority minutes are on individual files. Any changes are reflected in the placement plans in a timely way. Understanding of plans and such meetings are addressed in key worker sessions after the formal meetings to check the understanding of young people.

Contact arrangements are good and clearly recorded in placement plans. The home promotes and maintains constructive contact for the young people with their friends and families. The home has given each young person a mobile phone upon which young people can receive and make calls in private. Young people are given credit of £10 per month to ensure that they can use their phones. Exceptions to this are where there are restrictions placed upon contact, where this is the case the placing social worker has given written consent.

The authority meet regularly to discuss placements. The system in place for discussing appropriateness of placements is recorded and good risk assessments are undertaken looking at compatibility and the process of matching. The Registered Manager in the home is clearly

involved in the decision-making, the possibility of new placements and the potential impact upon existing young people resident.

Young people are consulted about routine day-to-day matters, their care and placement. There are formal meetings where a variety of matters are discussed, including bedrooms, TVs, possible new young people being admitted, school including travel and equipment, computers, activities helping and chores, sexism and healthy eating. Young people contribute to the agenda for the meetings and records of outcomes are clearly noted.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Older young people resident have dedicated aftercare workers and pathway planning has commenced. They are encouraged to be independent wherever possible. Skills in social presentation and life skills take place through key worker sessions. The home encourages the development of independent living skills through shopping, preparation of meals, laundering, having a budget and a bank account.

Young people live in domestic style, homely accommodation which is well decorated, maintained and furnished to a good standard. There is a large back garden and the gardens are well maintained. Young people live in a location which is within easy reach of schools, leisure facilities, transport and other community facilities that are important for their full development. Young people have the opportunity to personalise their bedrooms in a way that reflects their individual tastes and interests. There is enough space in the home to meet privately with visitors and do homework.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home provides a good Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Together these documents provide a good overview and explanation of the service aims and objectives. They are provided in an understandable format for placing social workers, families and children. The staffing policy is good and included in the Statement of Purpose.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good, this has improved as planned themed nights and training has taken place for some staff, other staff are planning to undertake the training. This enables staff to promote understanding of other cultures with the young people. All of the young people are treated fairly and equitably in the provision of services. Additional training is planned in the legislative context of equality and diversity to further improve understanding of the legislation that underpins discrimination and promotion of equality. Key worker sessions are undertaken to explore the cultural heritage of individual young people.

There is a competent dedicated staff team with a variety of skills and experience which meet the needs of the young people well. Staff in the home are positive about the training opportunities afforded to them by the local authority and comment positively about working in the home and about the support offered to them. All of the staff are suitably qualified to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3. Some of the care staff are working towards NVQ at level 4 in care, and deputising staff have NVQ at level 4 in care and management respectively.

The manager of the home undertakes regular monitoring of the home. A system of 'peer' monitoring has been introduced with other managers in the local authority to improve the identification of any shortfalls in each of the homes. This has had some success. However, some shortfalls have not been identified and rectified at the time of this visit and further improvement is being considered. A complaint was made by a young person in November 2009. At the time of this inspection the manager was awaiting information in relation to an investigation relating to the home; this is not timely, the outcome was not known until the day of this visit.

The young people's files are orderly and have all of the required information. Young people are advised of their right to access information about them in 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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
27	ensure that all staff recruitment information includes proof of identification and a complete employment history. (Regulation 26 and Schedule 2)	16 April 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a record of all complaints for monitoring purposes (NMS 16)
- further improve the detail of records and effectiveness of all sanctions and restraint (NMS 22)
- continue to ensure that there is a clear system to identify and rectify any shortfalls in respect of Regulation 34 checks. (NMS 33.1)