

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Alicea Churchward
Type of Inspection	Key

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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 (NMS) and Children's Home Regulations. All of the key standards were assessed.

Three requirements were issued with regard to ensuring that all staff have undergone the necessary checks before commencement of their employment in the home. Ensuring that any matters raised by the fire officer have a timely response. Also to provide a telephone on which young people may make and receive calls in private.

Ten recommendations have been raised in respect of all staff respecting children's privacy in practice. These are that young people have safe storage in their rooms for their personal possessions. That complaints are addressed without delay and young people are aware of the outcome. That there is thorough risk assessment in relation to any bullying. That all young people have a PEP on their files. Also young people should know the outcome of their reviews and what their care plan is. In addition that the records of sanctions and restraint contain more detail. The home does not currently complete records of compatibility when considering emergency admissions. A clear system is not in place for identifying any shortfalls when monitoring records. The staffing section of the Statement of Purpose needs updating to reflect any changes.

The home has made some good progress since the time of the last inspection although this has been hampered by the lack of evidence required to meet some of the standards and regulations. Young people report feeling safe in the home.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There have been improvements in respect of the staffing list. This now includes the experience of staff working in the home. The home now has a clear development plan in place. The home has been re-decorated and refurbished, this has improved the overall appearance of the home, to the benefit of the young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy a balanced diet. The home has plans in place to enlist the services of a nutritionist to enhance the home's ability to provide a healthy balanced diet. The home maintains copies of menus and young people are encouraged to contribute towards them. There are alternatives to the meals provided and the older residents can make their own meals if they

wish. There are suitable facilities in the dining area for young people and staff to eat together. Meals are reported to be orderly sociable occasions. Not all of the staff have a current food hygiene certificate, training is planned in October 2009.

Young people live in a healthy environment and their health needs are identified or are in the process of being identified. Services are provided to meet individual needs and their good health is promoted. Young people have health plans on their files. The plans clearly identify assessed needs and how these will be met. Issues of personal hygiene are dealt with sensitively. Young people have attended their health assessments and are registered with local services for routine appointments. Staff facilitate appointments and access specialised services where these are required. The authority have a clear health promotion policy in place.

The arrangements for the storage and recording of medication are very good. The contents of the medical cabinet are regularly checked and records reflect the contents. Young people have consent to medical treatment in their files. All but one new member of staff are trained in the use of first aid and first aid boxes are provided within the home. Young people's health needs are met and their welfare is safeguarded by the staff implementing the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing treatment.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Young people report that their bedrooms are private places, but that although staff always knock before entering their rooms, they do not always wait for a response from young people before entering. This can compromise the overall feeling of privacy. Information is observed to be dealt with and stored in a confidential manner. Young people report that they do not have secure storage in their rooms to store their personal and confidential things. The authority provides guidance, for staff and children, on when it may be necessary to conduct a room search. They are searched only on clear grounds, which are explained to the child concerned, and where failure to carry out the search would put at risk the welfare of the child or others. Records are maintained of such searches. In this case smoking in bedrooms has been problematic.

The authority has a clear complaints policy and procedural guidance for staff to follow. Information is provided to young people in the children's guide. A number of complaints from neighbours are noted, the home has worked hard to resolve these and present the home in a more positive light. Work has been undertaken with the young people about being good neighbours. Young people are assisted by the staff to make formal complaints. One complaint is outstanding and the young person has not been made aware of the outcome. Staff have had a briefing in their team meeting about dealing with complaints.

All of the staff receive safeguarding training as part of the mandatory training during their induction periods. Staff are clear about reporting procedures in respect of safeguarding matters and the process of receiving information from young people that may constitute a safeguarding matter. Staff are also familiar with the whistleblowing policy of the authority.

Bullying has been problematic in this home and has recently reduced significantly. The staff in the home have increased supervision to the young people, and increased diversionary activities. The risk assessments in relation to bullying do not fully address all matters laid out in the standard. Staff are planning direct work strategies with young people to increase their awareness of such behaviours and the potential impact upon others.

The home maintains records of absence. The number of absences has again reduced significantly and is not currently an area of concern. The home has a clear strategy in place and work alongside the police when incidents have occurred.

Staff in the home have received training in behaviour management. The home maintains records of sanctions and restraint. The sanctions record is clear and sanctions are usually in the form of reparation for damage or mis-spent monies and less time on a games console. However the record does not always record the effectiveness of the measure used. Records of restraint do not fully comply with regulatory requirements, this is because staff do not always include a description of the presenting behaviours or in some cases a description of the hold used. The home has individual behaviour support plans in place and a number of rewards for positive behaviour are evident.

The home has a number of risk assessments in relation to the building and for individual young people. The home maintains a fire risk assessment and the fire officer has visited the premises to ensure compliance with fire regulations. Areas of improvement have not been addressed within the timescales outlined in the risk assessment, a visit to the home on the day of the inspection was due to replace the fire doors. This did not take place and this matter remains outstanding, this poses a risk to young people. The home maintains records of fire equipment and maintenance. All of the young people have been involved in a fire drill. The frequency and times of evacuations meets with the standard.

The home has begun to maintain records of checks conducted on staff files. The manager has visited the Human Resources department (HR) to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements. At the time of this inspection some of the evidence could not be accessed. In addition there is insufficient evidence that those workers employed on a temporary basis have undergone the same checks. The home is unable to provide sufficient information to demonstrate that there is safe recruitment of all staff at the time of this inspection.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people have access to external specialised services, should they require them. A sample of services available include cultural groups, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), Children's Rights and access to services provided by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). Support is provided for any child for whom English is not their first language enabling them to communicate their needs, wishes and concerns. Each of the young people have access to someone independent of the home with which they may make contact with concerns or personal problems.

The home promotes education for the young people and facilitates attendance at school or college. The home maintains links with individual schools. Each young person has an education placement and attendance is generally good. The authority has a clear education policy in place. Not all of the young people have a Personal Education Plan (PEP) in place, the home are in the process of ensuring meetings are arranged to address this matter.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have detailed placement plans in place, these meet the standard and are comprehensive documents which outline how each child will be cared for on a day-to-day basis. This plan details how young people's needs are to be addressed, the specific roles and responsibilities of key others and is based upon a thorough assessment. There is evidence of review of these plans. A current area of development of key worker sessions, planned individual sessions with the young people. Resource files have been developed and self esteem files have been produced for each young person to detail progress.

Statutory reviews are held within the timescales. Young people are encouraged to participate in these reviews and are assisted to put forward their views. Adults who are significant to the young person are also able to contribute. Key workers prepare a report for the review in consultation with the young people. However not all young people are aware of their overall care plans or how long they will remain at the home.

Young people have regular contact with their families. Some have structured supervised contact. The home has provided staffing and other resources to provide positive experiences for the young people to engage constructively with their families. Contact arrangements are clearly outlined in the placement plans. Some young people report that contact with their families has improved. The home provides mobile phone credit to young people who own a mobile phone. Young people who do not have a mobile phone cannot access a telephone without asking staff as currently they use the telephone in the office.

The Statement of Purpose allows for the home to admit young people in an emergency. Current placements do not appear to have been disrupted as a result of these. Decisions about admissions to the home, about the needs of the child being admitted and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents are not currently recorded. The home does have a clear admission and discharge policy which is included in the Statement of Purpose.

Young people are consulted about everyday matters. In addition a young people's meeting is held and recorded. The home has developed forms in the hope that placing social workers and parents would offer some feedback. This has had a limited response. The home are looking at other ways to provide evidence of how they have obtained their views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people have pathway plans in place where appropriate. The home encourages the development of independent living skills through shopping, preparation of meals, laundering, having a budget and a bank account. Young people have a dedicated after care worker.

The overall appearance of the home has improved. There has been re-decoration and refurbishment to the home. Vacant rooms are decorated and furnished. The home is maintained to a good standard and is clean. The home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment. Young peoples bedrooms are highly personalised. Young people do not currently have secure storage in their rooms to store their personal possessions, they do have keys to lock their rooms if they wish. At the time of this inspection some work is being undertaken to the garden area. which is also well maintained. Young people have been consulted about decoration and changes to the garden areas of the home.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The home has a Statement of Purpose in place that is clear about how the home operates. This is available for parents and others needing this information. The staffing policy is outlined in this document. The staff list is not up-to-date with the recent changes. The young people are given a welcome pack upon admission to the home that includes a colourful children's guide that gives information about room searches and rules. It has been revised to include Every Child Matters headings. It also includes information about children's rights, complaints and contact details for Ofsted.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff in the home report that have not yet undertaken specific training in this area, this impacts upon their ability to develop the understanding of young people. The home has a resource file for staff to access. There are plans in place to explore different activities and themed nights during which time will be spent exploring different cultures. Young people are treated fairly and equitably according to their individual needs.

The home has a dedicated staff team with a variety of previous experiences to bring to the home. The overall competence of staff, both as a staff group and on individual shifts, is satisfactory. Staff have been employed on a temporary basis to cover any vacancies and staff have undertaken overtime shifts to ensure that the young people experience little disruption.

Staff report having good access to training opportunities a sample of which includes behaviour management, key working, Safeguarding, Safe and Healthy working, food hygiene, mental health awareness and access to external training which was delivered by the PCT. New plans are in place to address future training needs with the staff in their Employment Development Reviews. The number of staff in the home that have completed their NVQ Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People is currently 91%. This exceeds the 80% cited in the standard. Deputy managers have attained NVQ Level 4 in Care.

The homes records are regularly monitored by the manager of the home, however there is no clear system in place to identify and rectify any shortfalls, in this case employment checks for all staff and the records of sanctions and restraint. There is a development plan in place, this is linked to the authorities Children's Service Plan. The document is clear about objectives and what actions are needed to achieve these.

Young people have a variety of files. They are stored in a confidential manner and are accessible.

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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26	ensure that any unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children accommodated in the home are eliminated, in this case replacement of the fire doors, as requested by the fire officer (Regulation 23 (c))	31 October 2009
27	ensure that there is full and satisfactory information available in respect of all staff prior to commencing employment, and that these are made available for inspection purposes (Regulation 26 and Schedule 2)	9 October 2009
9	provide a telephone on which young people may make and receive telephone calls in private, without reference to persons working in the home (Regulation 15 (4)(a))	31 October 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff respect a child's wish for privacy in practice (NMS 9)
- ensure that each young person is provided with lockable or otherwise safe storage for personal possessions (NMS 24.5)
- ensure that complaints are addressed without delay and the complainant is kept informed of progress (NMS16)
- regularly carry out recorded risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest and ensure that clear strategies are recorded to reduce such behaviours (NMS 18.5)
- ensure that all young people have an up-to-date Personal Education Plan (NMS 14.4)
- ensure that all young people are made aware of the outcome of their statutory reviews and care plans (NMS 3)
- ensure that there are records in respect of any admissions to the home, about the needs of the child being admitted and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents (NMS 5.7)
- ensure that the sanctions and restraint records comply with the standard (NMS 22.10)
- update staffing the staffing list in the Statement of Purpose (NMS 1)
- ensure that there is a clear system to identify and rectify any shortfalls in respect of Regulation 34 checks (NMS 33.1)