

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Taylor
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	22 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

The home may accommodate up to six young people of either gender and is set in a residential area. It is close to all the main amenities and facilities. The house is a large and spacious detached property with a large rear garden. There are six bedrooms for young people and appropriate bathroom and toilet facilities. There is also a spacious dining room and lounge for communal activities.

Summary

At this unannounced inspection all key standards were assessed. The staff team work hard to ensure that the young people receive a good standard of care and that their safety and well-being is promoted. Health care needs are planned for and met, with particular attention being paid to ensuring that emotional well-being is supported.

Good monitoring of records ensures that care plans and the staff team's knowledge of individual's needs and progress is up to date.

Education is valued and promoted and young people encouraged to experience this aspect of their lives as positive. It is clear that the young people are confident in expressing their views and that the atmosphere in the home promotes this. One young person reported 'I actually look forward to coming home. It's good.'

Three actions and four recommendations were made as a result of this inspection.

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 previous inspection one action was made relating to ensuring that monitoring visits required under Regulation 33 occur on a monthly basis. This has been addressed.

Two recommendations made at the last inspection have also been addressed. Over 80% of the staff have now achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People. All members of staff who may be involved in physical interventions have now attended refresher training.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are assisted and encouraged to eat a healthy diet. Staff take each young person's likes and dislikes, with regards to food, into consideration when menus are planned. The menu is completed in conjunction with young people and was seen to offer an appropriately balanced diet. Young people are able to prepare snacks and drinks in the home's kitchen. All the young people are offered the opportunity to develop their independence skills by buying food and preparing meals.

The health needs of the young people are met to a good standard. The young people are assisted to attend medical appointments and the home facilitates and organises appointments

with health specialists such as counsellors. Members of staff work closely with health professionals to ensure that young people receive good levels of support, especially during times of emotional crisis. Close liaison with external agencies, such as the looked after children nurse and the children and adolescent mental health service, ensure young people benefit from support derived from a multi-disciplinary approach.

The home has an efficient and accurate system to monitor the administration of medication. Medication is subject to a regular audit which ensures that the amount in stock tallies with the records of administration.

The health needs of the young people are all known, met and promoted to a good standard by the staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Privacy is respected by the staff team and sensitive information is securely stored. Young people are aware of the circumstances in which room searches may occur. A record is made should this happen. Telephone calls to social workers and family and friends can be made in private. Staff are sensitive to young people's right to privacy and knock on doors before entering bedrooms.

Young people are confident in expressing their opinions and feelings and know how to make a complaint. They are able to voice their opinions on an informal basis with members of staff on duty as well as the manager and can meet with external managers who visit the home. Complaints are addressed promptly and young people receive feedback on how a complaint has been dealt with and resolved.

All members of staff receive child protection training and have access to local safeguarding procedures and the organisation's child protection policy. The staff are clear as to their obligations in the event that they have concerns about a young person's well-being. Good records are maintained on any child protection concerns and how they have been pursued and resolved.

Young people understand that bullying is not tolerated and this is made very clear in their handbook. Staff encourage young people to resolve any issues by meeting with each other in the event of conflict. The young people and members of staff report that bullying is not an issue in the home.

The home has a clear policy for the staff to follow in the event that a young person goes missing. Each young person has it clearly recorded in their care plan what course of action will be pursued should they leave the home without permission or not return to the home at the agreed time. This strategy is also explained to the young people so that they understand what the consequences will be if they go missing. There is effective liaison with the local police to determine what steps are needed if a young person goes missing. Following such an event a record is made of what happened when the young person returned to the home, how the young person was debriefed and what the reasons were for the young person going missing. Incidents of absences without permission are monitored and reasons analysed.

On admission young people are made aware of the expectations with regards to behaviour. Each young person has a behaviour management plan which outlines what strategies can help

them to retain control of their behaviour and what triggers may cause distress and challenging behaviour.

Where sanctions are imposed they are clearly recorded. Young people are given the opportunity to comment on sanctions imposed. The effectiveness of sanctions is not always analysed or measured.

If physical restraint is used, a record is kept of the incident and this is also checked by the manager to ensure that the use of physical intervention is appropriate. All members of staff are trained in the method of restraint used in the home.

The home aims to provide a safe and secure environment. Risk assessments for both the home and activities are used to ensure the safety of all young people and staff. These risk assessments are not always reviewed and updated to ensure they are accurate and up to date, for example, a risk assessment to monitor a young person's behaviour leading to periods of going missing had not been reviewed. This could mean that measures to manage this behaviour are not assessed and reviewed if necessary. The fire alarm system is tested regularly and evacuation exercises carried out. Access to the building is limited and all visitors have to report to staff on arrival, produce identification and sign into the building.

The organisation has a thorough recruitment process. This ensures that all the necessary checks required by regulations are carried out prior to a member of staff starting work.

The systems operated within the home ensure that the young people's well-being and safety is promoted and protected to a good standard.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Individual support to the young people is of a very good standard. Each young person has a key worker who meets with them regularly in order to ascertain their feelings and progress in areas they have agreed to work on. Additionally the staff team as a whole has a good understanding of each young person's needs. This process is supported by ongoing written communication and daily handover sessions.

Interactions between young people and staff are relaxed and good humoured. The staff team work together consistently to encourage positive behaviour and set acceptable boundaries.

Each young person has a personal education plan that clearly defines the type of programme they should be receiving. Close liaison with schools and college placements ensures that the young people are offered good levels of support to take part in education and experience it as a positive experience in their lives.

Each young person's preferences are known with regards to the activities which they enjoy. A sound risk assessment process enables young people to enjoy these safely. Activities enjoyed include bowling, swimming, drives in the car and visiting friends in the local community.

Individual needs of the young people are well known by the staff team and the young people receive good levels of support.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All young people have placement plans that identify their health, physical, social, educational, cultural and leisure needs. Young people are involved in the development of their placement plans. The plans are adjusted in line with the changing needs of the young people and are the subject of regular review and assessment by key workers. The staff are very aware of the specific needs of each young person. Placement plans are subject to regular review in line with looked after children guidance. The outcomes/recommendations arising out of reviews are incorporated in the care planning process. Young people are encouraged to attend their reviews. The staff team work particularly hard to ensure that young people's needs are regularly assessed by themselves and external professionals particularly at times of crisis.

There is clear guidance for staff on the type and frequency of contact each of the young people can have with their parents, relatives and friends. Young people can maintain contact via visits and the telephone. Any restrictions regarding access are made clear to all parties. Detailed written records are maintained of any contacts and the staff collate this information and share it with others, such as placing officers and social workers, especially if the contact affects the young person in any way.

There is a clear written procedure which sets out a structure for introductions to the home in the event of a new admission. The process is explained in the home's Statement of Purpose. Young people are introduced to the staff before coming to the home and are provided with a handbook explaining what the home intends to provide for them. Visits then take place prior to a young person moving in. The admission process aims to move at a pace with which the young person can cope. The members of staff are very sensitive to the anxieties a young person may experience when coming into the home and prepare for this accordingly.

The young people are able to voice their opinions, on how they feel the home is running, in informal settings such as daily interaction with members of staff as well as in key work sessions. House meetings have not been held for some time and this means that the opportunity for the young people to meet in a group to discuss their care has been lessened.

The interaction between the members of staff and young people is relaxed and warm. Young people feel they are listened to and supported even during times of distress and challenging behaviour. Support given to the young people is delivered sensitively. Staff work hard to maintain behavioural expectations and boundaries while ensuring the young people feel listened to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Procedures are in place to support young people as they approach adulthood. The care planning process incorporates pathway planning to enable young people to prepare for independence. This means staff are fully aware of the need to consider any life-skills work or the necessity to liaise with placing authorities if a young person is due to leave care at any point in the near future. This approach also ensures young people are given every opportunity to engage in the process and to contribute to any proposed plans.

The home has a system in place whereby maintenance issues are recorded in a book and then passed on to the relevant staff. The book is not always used, with some matters being passed on verbally. This could mean that the time taken to rectify some maintenance issues is not always recorded.

The home is comfortable and well maintained. Each young person is able to personalise their room with posters and pictures.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has produced a Statement of Purpose that details the nature of the service. The statement is regularly reviewed. The home has also produced a children's guide that details the nature of the home including its routines, activities and facilities. Young people are supplied with a copy prior to admission.

Some members of staff have not received planned supervision as often as they should. Members of staff report that teamwork is good and that informal support is readily available from other team members and senior members of staff. The home has a comprehensive range of policies, procedures and working practices that are introduced to new staff during their induction. Policies and procedures are accessible to staff at all times. There are regular staff meetings and minutes are taken. Staff are deployed in sufficient numbers to ensure the needs of young people are met.

The training offered to the staff team is varied and regular. Over 80% of the staff team have achieved National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 Caring for Children and Young People. There is an induction plan which ensures that new members of staff are adequately prepared for working in the home.

The home has a manager who has yet to complete the Ofsted registration process. Practice is monitored by an external manager who carries out regular visits to assess the standard of care provided. Reports written as a result of these visits indicate which areas of the home need improvement. The acting manager in turn also regularly checks all the areas outlined in Schedule 6, such as restraint and sanctions, medication, accidents and admissions and discharges. The overall monitoring of records carried out by members of staff and the acting manager is of a good standard.

The young people's care plans are well organised, regularly reviewed and updated. They are subject to auditing by the manager.

The promotion of equality and diversity in the home is good. Each young person's individual needs are known to the staff team. Records indicate that young people have their cultural and religious needs assessed prior to admission and that the home makes arrangements to ensure that they can be met.

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
26	ensure that all risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly. (Regulation 23 (c))	15 April 2010
28	ensure that all members of staff receive supervision on a regular basis. (Regualtion 27 (4) (a))	30 April 2010
34	appoint an individual to apply to Ofsted to become the Registered Manager. (Regulation 7 (1))	31 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the effectiveness of sanctions is analysed and measured on a consistent basis (NMS 22.11)
- ensure the opinions and views of young people are ascertained on a regular and frequent basis. This is with particular reference to encouraging the young people to have house meetings (NMS 8.4)
- ensure that the arrangements for the repair and maintenance for the building, furniture and equipment are followed by staff. (NMS 24.3)