

Inspection report for Children's Home

Unique reference number	SC049189
Inspection date	15/11/2010
Inspector	Monica Farrimond
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	16/02/2010
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 consists of two adjoining terrace houses linked by an internal connecting door. The home provides accommodation for up to three young people of either sex aged between 11 and 18 years.

The ground floor of the home has two lounges, two kitchens and two dining areas. The first floor has five bedrooms. There are three bedrooms for young people, allowing each young person to have their own room. The two remaining bedrooms are for staff and office use. Parking is available to the side of the home and on the main road at the front of the home.

Young people are accommodated from placing local authorities and from existing homes within the organisation. The home is not adapted to accommodate young people with a physical disability.

At the time of the inspection two young people were present and participated in the inspection process.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

The purpose of this unannounced full inspection was to inspect all the key national minimum standards to assess how well the home supports children and young people placed there. In addition, the recommendations made at the previous inspection were reviewed.

Monitoring and management of the home is generally good. Placement plans are thorough and ensure that young people's needs are identified and goals set to meet them. Communication between the manager and placing authorities is good, which ensures consistency of approach to the care, documentation and review of the progress of the young people. The home supports young people's health care needs to a good standard. However, the missing from home protocol is not always followed by staff, and this issue needs to be addressed to ensure that young people are returned safely to the home, as quickly as possible.

The two recommendations made following the last inspection relating to staff training and internet access have not been addressed and are repeated in this report. The national minimum standard relating to staff training is to ensure that the young people are looked after by staff who have a basic child care qualification, and therefore understand the basic needs of the young people they look after. The lack

of internet access for young people accommodated, restricts the young people's choice when looking for employment or leisure opportunities in the local area.

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager of the home had been asked to address issues relating to internet access for the use of young people and to ensure that the number of staff with an appropriate childcare qualification was increased to meet the national minimum standard of 80%. Neither of these issues have been completed. The staff say they are supported well by the manager to complete this course of study and this should ensure compliance with the national minimum standard in the near future. The manager says that a computer has been purchased for the use of the young people, and he is continuing to source an internet connection, which he also expects to provide in the near future.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people receive good advice about healthy eating and nutritional guidance from the staff. Staff encourage young people to eat a varied and balanced diet appropriate to their dietary needs. Snacks, including fresh fruit, are freely available in the home. The manager is proactive and innovative in the way staff involve and help young people to learn and understand the benefits of a good diet. Young people's choices of food are promoted and diversity is encouraged through consultation with the young people accommodated, and the number of choices offered.

Staff support young people extremely well. Young people learn skills such as shopping, preparation of healthy meals, safe food storage and hygiene. Both staff and young people have significant input about the choice of meals served in the home and with menu planning. The home has a suitably furnished dining/kitchen area. This enables young people to sit at the dining table and have meals in a social environment with the other young people and staff.

Good systems in the home help to ensure young people's health needs are well met. Young people's health and welfare is closely monitored by staff ensuring their good health is promoted. Comprehensive partnership working with health professionals is part of the home's holistic work with young people. Strong links with health agencies provide young people with good advice and guidance. This includes education about sexual health and relationships.

Staff have a good understanding about young people's individual needs and comprehensive health plans are in place. Young people feel staff help them significantly to maintain a state of well-being. Staff ensure young people have access to primary health care services for their routine health needs to be met.

Staff encourage all young people to lead a healthy lifestyle and take part in outdoor activities. However, the young people prefer to make their own arrangements and

meet up with friends locally, usually at friends' houses or in cafes. Staff still continue to encourage a healthy lifestyle and occasionally the young people do take part in activities, such as swimming and walking.

The home has guidance in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medicines. Records are accurate and demonstrate the guidance is effective in practice. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have an individual bedroom with a key to the door. This enables young people to have their own private and personal space. Although young people have access to a telephone in the home, this is not readily available to make and receive calls in private without reference to staff. However staff ensure that young people always have credit on their mobiles, so they can make and receive calls in private. Confidentiality is managed effectively and personal records are securely stored.

The home's complaints procedure is known to the young people and gives them the opportunity to raise any issues they are unhappy with. Any complaint is taken seriously and effectively dealt with by the manager. Consultation systems are robust and allow young people to have their views and opinions heard. Young people said they feel staff listen to them and their views are valued. No complaints have been made by the young people since the last inspection.

There are sound procedures and good care practices that keep young people safe in the home. Staff demonstrate a strong commitment to preserving the dignity and privacy of young people and they have a very good understanding of safeguarding issues, which ensures that young people are protected from abuse. Staff are aware of the need to keep young people safe. They receive training and are familiar with safeguarding guidance. Staff follow this guidance in order to help to protect the young people from harm.

Young people say there are no issues of bullying in the home although there can be times of disagreement. Staff are competent to challenge bullying behaviour. Individual work is undertaken to educate young people that bullying is wrong. This helps to increase young people's understanding about respect for themselves and other people.

Good procedures are in place should young people go missing from the home, but these procedures are not always followed by staff; the manager has addressed this issue with staff involved through staff supervision and in staff meetings. The consequences of failing to follow an agreed protocol means there may be a delay in safely returning the young person to the home. Generally staff record unauthorised absences fully, with details of the action taken to try to ensure the young person's safe return. Young people say staff talk to them about the dangers associated with unauthorised absences, and this has been effective in minimising the number of

young people going missing from the home.

Staff encourage young people to develop appropriate and acceptable behaviours. Staff promote a positive culture within the house which includes rewards and incentives for young people. Relationships between young people and staff are good. Staff have a positive view of the young people they work with. They promote and reward positive behaviour and support young people well, so that they are protected from incidents developing into episodes of challenging behaviour. All staff are properly trained to diffuse difficult situations. Young people say that the staff are fair in the use of sanctions. Individual risk assessments and placement plans clearly show how staff work to promote behaviour that is positive and to lessen the risk of behaviour becoming challenging. Restraints are only ever used as a last resort and in very clearly defined situations. The infrequency of such incidents indicates that the strategies that staff use work well and that young people benefit from the way in which they are cared for.

Young people are protected by the recruitment and selection process. Staff undergo appropriate checks before starting work at the home. The organisation ensures that staff apply for an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure and all other statutory checks are undertaken prior to a member of staff commencing employment at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have good access to individual support when required. Young people speak very positively about the individual support they receive from staff. The comprehensive knowledge that staff gain about a young person prior to placement in the home means that they are able to provide young people with good levels of individual support. Full information about all young people is obtained prior to placement and is developed into care and behavioural support plans. These are kept up-to-date and are regularly reviewed. Advice and guidance on health, sex and relationships is provided in the key working sessions and each young person can spend individualised time outside the home with their key worker. This ensures that each young person can receive help, guidance and support in private, when needed or requested.

The young people currently accommodated at the home are no longer required to attend full time education. Young people who come to live at this home have not always attended school before they are admitted. Education is valued and staff have developed an ethos in the home, which endeavours to make attendance at school a normal part of life, which in turn encourages young people to attend school. Staff at the home are endeavouring to ensure that they support young people fully in the next stage of their lives, be it in further education or employment. The home does not have access to the internet for the use of young people; this limits the education and employment prospects for young people, excluding them from looking at job prospects locally and nationally.

There are ample opportunities for young people to take part in leisure pursuits, hobbies and interests. However, the young people accommodated are at the age when they just want to "hang around" with their friends, although occasionally will agree to accompany staff to the cinema or bowling.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Placement plans clearly identify young people's care needs. Plans are informative and monitored so that good outcomes are achieved for the young people. Staff are well informed about the diverse range of needs of the young people and work with them to ensure these are met. Young people are fully involved in the care planning process. The plans are regularly reviewed, not only by the home when there is a change in circumstances, but also through the local authority statutory reviewing process. The home has well-established systems, to review young people's care and placement plans. The manager and key workers take an active role and encourage young people to attend their review meetings. Young people's files are updated accordingly from the meetings. Their files show any changes to future plans and the action staff need to take, as a result of the reviews.

Staff encourage young people to make choices about contact with family and friends in line with their placement plans. Staff actively promote contact so that young people continue to have positive links with those who are important to them outside of the home. Practical support is given for contact to take place, such as the provision of transport.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned way. There are excellent systems in place to ensure young people have information about the care and routines in the home. Young people said their move to the home was very well planned and they had tea visits and an overnight stay before admission. Those placed in an emergency said staff and other young people made them feel comfortable and welcome in the home.

With an established group of young people, staff are also conscious of the need to match any new placements to ensure compatibility. Impact risk assessments have been further developed to assist with the matching process.

Young people are asked their opinions about issues that affect their daily life and future. This includes their views about aspects of the running of the home, for example, menus, activities, house decoration. There are a variety of consultation methods such as key worker sessions and consultation meetings. Following consultation meetings, the manager responds with a child-friendly written reply to their query or request. This substantial level of consultation helps to improve young people's quality of life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The manager and members of staff encourage and support young people to take responsibility for their actions and to develop adult responsibilities. Basic skills in relation to independence are facilitated during the young people's time at the home. They are encouraged to be independent and all young people are on an independence training programme designed to help them develop their independent living skills. Independent living plans are well used at the home, and young people's progress towards independent living is closely monitored. The independence training is well supported by staff.

The home provides a good standard of accommodation for young people. All have their own individual single bedroom which they may personalise with posters and photographs if they wish. The facilities are suitably decorated and furnished throughout and kept clean and tidy. There is space for young people to engage in leisure activities and meet with visitors. Young people can have a say in the general décor, furnishings and upkeep of the home and any areas requiring repair or maintenance are promptly addressed. Young people are very positive about their bedrooms and the facilities in general. All visitors are required to sign the visitor's book.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The service has a clear Statement of Purpose that sets out how young people will be cared for when they stay at the home. The young person's guide to the service is produced in a child-friendly format, giving young people a clear and detailed picture of how the home works and who will be looking after them during their stay.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All staff have received training on such issues and good policies are in place that provide them with guidance and relevant information. Staff support and assist young people to develop their own individuality and identity. Care planning documents contain sections specifically highlighting cultural, religious, racial or language needs, and referral documentation requires placing authorities to highlight any such needs. Young people are encouraged to be tolerant of each other and respect differing views and beliefs. Staff are provided with a good range of training, including mandatory courses in safeguarding, first aid and the administration of medication. All staff appointed to work at the home are required to have, or to work towards, a qualification in caring for children and young people. Young people's welfare is safeguarded by a committed staff team. The staff are in varying stages of achieving a qualification at National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. Currently the overall qualification recommendation is not met, but staff are being encouraged and supported by the manager to continue their studies and gain this qualification. The manager of the home is experienced and competent. The service is

effectively managed and well run.

Staffing levels are good, which ensures that young people are properly supervised and they are able to take part in individual activities if they so wish. Rotas allow staff sufficient time to undertake individual work with young people, to attend regular team meetings and to complete necessary paperwork. Staff demonstrate a clear determination to promote inclusion for young people and to encourage them to develop their skills. Staffing levels support this.

Team meetings are used to look at practice issues and the needs of the young people. The manager and staff also demonstrate a strong commitment to reviewing and improving the service that is offered to young people and their families. There are robust systems in place which enable managers within the home and the wider organisation to monitor the quality of care that is given to young people.

Information that is held on young people is thorough, so that their needs can be met. All information that is sensitive is securely stored, so that confidentiality can be maintained. Information is easily accessible to all staff, which ensures that care is consistent and in line with the young person's care plan.

What must be done to secure future improvement?

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children who are absent from the home without consent are protected in line with the home's written policy and guidance (NMS 19.1)
- provide young people with a computer and access to the internet to carry out education work and for leisure pursuits (NMS 14.5)
- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete a National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent. (NMS 29.5)