

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	2 November 2009
Inspector	Elaine Clare
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	12 February 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 is a large, two storey detached house set in its own grounds in a quiet village, situated within easy travelling distance of large local towns. It is registered to accommodate two young people of either gender. Each young person is allocated their own individual bedroom at the home. The home is maintained and furnished to a high standard.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection took place in November 2009. Young people participated in the inspection. Following the previous inspection of the home in February 2009, the home was required to make improvements in one area of staying safe. These matters have been addressed. This inspection found that the home provides a settled environment for young people and the outcome for young people is good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the last inspection the home had only one recommendation to address. This was in regard to the door locking mechanism. This has now been addressed to a satisfactory standard.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home recognises the need to encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle. Planned menus show a varied, healthy and nutritious menu. Young people report that staff introduce new meals and talk to them about healthy eating options. Fruit is available for them to help themselves to.

Health needs are identified as young people are admitted to the home and examinations arranged with the doctor, dentist and optician to make sure they are in good health. There is evidence of good communication with responsible placing officers to consider the need for additional services, such as child and adolescent mental health services although these are detailed within health plans. Arrangements for the administration and recording of medication are sound.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Good levels of privacy are afforded to young people. Their bedrooms are respected by staff as providing private space. Under normal circumstances, staff do not enter without knocking and receiving the permission of young people. Confidential information relating to young people is stored securely in the staff office.

Staff inform young people how they can make a complaint if dissatisfied with the standard of care they are receiving. Young people know that the young person's handbook also contains information that they can refer to. No complaints have been made since the previous inspection

and young people say they are treated fairly and can resolve most issues through direct negotiation with staff.

The home trains staff in the child protection procedures to be followed in the event of a young person making a disclosure about abuse. Concerns about children's safety are appropriately referred to placing officers and to the Local Safeguarding Children's Board along with a request for a strategy meeting.

Some friction exists between young people but this is not identified as bullying by staff or by young people. Staff carefully manage the relationships between young people to reduce the potential for conflict and for bullying. The planning of daily activities keeps young people constructively occupied and minimises the opportunities for bullying to occur. The organising of group activities attempts to take into account the requests of all young people to avoid friction.

Incidents of young people being absent from the home have reduced since the previous inspection. Staff are familiar with the missing procedures protocol and know the action they must take to keep young people safe. Staff conduct searches of the local area in an attempt to locate them and persuade them to return to the home. If unable to do so, they are reported as missing to the police.

Overall, behaviour is well managed and incidents of physical intervention and sanctions are low. There is sufficient detail in the restraints record about the holds used. A safe environment is provided for young people and staff. Weekly checks on the fire alarm system and regular maintenance of mechanical equipment such as boilers ensures that all equipment remains in good working order and is safe. Young people take part in fire drills so that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

Recruitment records were inspected as part of this inspection and evidence on the checks completed for all staff was sought. A good system has been maintained for verifying that all checks have been completed for all staff working in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The emotional needs of young people are considered and responded to. Young people say that there is always someone on duty whom they can talk to. They said that staff: 'know when something is wrong and spend time talking to them in an attempt to sort things out.' Key working sessions take place regularly and young people know they can request individual time with any member of staff. Young people have access to counselling services provided by an external agency. Referrals to child and adolescent mental health services are made in conjunction with placing authorities, if considered.

Young people are supported to pursue a range of education and career opportunities. The home works closely with the local education department and the National Teaching Advisory Service to ensure that the assessed needs of young people are met. All young people currently have an education plan that is being closely adhered to with appropriate education resources having been identified such as attendance at a local high school or home tuition. Similarly, the close links established with Connexions help school leavers to access further education and

work opportunities. Although faced with some resistance from young people, the home persists in encouraging them to attend and as a result, helps them access the opportunities available.

Staff encourage young people to make constructive use of their leisure time and try to engage young people in at least one activity each day. Good use is made of community resources such as the cinema and bowling alley. Staff show young people how they can enjoy activities that cost very little, such as the library and the cinema, as well as those for which there is a cost implication. The home has a vehicle and the village is served by a regular bus service.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Careful consideration is given to the dynamics of the group when admitting young people to the home. The home's admission procedures usually include a pre-admission risk assessment considering the impact of the admission for all young people.

Staff clearly understand the needs of the young people and how they are to work with them. They work consistently with young people to help them achieve the objectives outlined in placement plans.

Young people have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of their care. They are supported by staff to attend and make written contributions to statutory reviews to influence the decisions that are made. Weekly house meetings give them the opportunity to discuss menus, plan activities and express opinions about the way the home is run.

The home supports young people to maintain contact with family and friends. Reports compiled of each visit allow staff to monitor progress.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The daily routine of the home provides opportunities for young people to develop independence skills. They are able to prepare snacks and drinks when they want to and can help cook meals. Staff encourage young people to help with the shopping to develop an understanding of how much food costs.

Overall the home provides pleasant and homely accommodation for children. Décor and furnishings are of a good standard. The young people's bedroom windows have been disabled and young people are unable to open the window for fresh air. A good range of facilities including television, DVD and videos are provided. The premises are modern and typical of other houses in the local community. It offers easy access to shopping, recreation facilities and to public transport links. The location of the home supports children to gain independence skills at a level appropriate to their age. Sleeping-in accommodation is provided for two members of staff with one sleeping-in room being sited on each landing, in close proximity to children's bedrooms. This provides a good level of supervision for children during the night.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Information is published in a clear format; the children's guide which is given to young people is attractively presented and is easier for them to read but it does not contain the new company details.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good with the different needs of young people being considered and planned for.

The home has experienced consistently strong leadership by the Registered Manager and his assistant manager. Appropriate arrangements have been identified to cover the shortfalls caused as a result of sickness, and staff leaving. These mostly involve permanent staff working additional hours but this maintains consistency of care and lessens disruption for young people.

Core training such as restraints and first aid is provided to staff during their induction period with refresher training being provided at intervals. There is a training strategy in place and staff commence National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People once they have completed their induction training. The current ratio of staff having achieved this qualification does not meet the 80% target stated in the national minimum standards but the home anticipates that this ratio will be met imminently as several staff are due to complete their training. The staff team has a good gender, age and cultural balance and young people recognise the different qualities that the team offers. Duty rosters are planned to ensure that each shift is staffed by people with sufficient skills, experience and knowledge of procedures.

Staff are well supported by each other and receive regular professional supervision with a senior member of staff and this is at the frequency specified in the national minimum standards. The quality of staff practice and information recorded is subject to close scrutiny by the Registered Manager and the external line manager of the home. The system in place is effective in identifying improvements required.

The progress of young people is closely monitored and recorded within individual files. The contents of files contain all the personal information required by regulations.

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
24	ensure that all parts of the children's home used by the children are adequately ventilated. (Regulation 31.2)	31 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- review the children's guide to include details of the provider. (NMS 1)