

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	11 June 2010
Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	1 March 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 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 is a purpose-built children's home situated in a residential area in a small town on the outskirts of a city. There is ramped access to the front door. It is owned by a local authority and provides accommodation for up to eight young people of either gender within the age range of 12 to 16 years. It has gardens to three sides and parking to the front.

The young people are accommodated in single bedrooms and have the opportunity to use a range of recreation and sitting areas. Facilities for cooking, bathing, laundry and storage are provided. The aim of the home is to work with and support young people who may have had troubled experiences, which may include some form of abuse and who may have had previous placement breakdowns. The home has recently changed from being a short-term facility to a long-term unit. The home has waking night staff.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced inspection was to check that the national minimum standards have been met.

There are some very good aspects to this home; this is a well experienced staff team who are clearly committed to providing young people with good life experiences. There is a friendly warm atmosphere in the home and relations between staff and young people were seen to be caring and nurturing. The home is well maintained providing a comfortable environment for the young people.

The majority of the young people respond well to the support and guidance offered to them. Some achieve well in education with extra educational support available as needed.

Shortfalls identified during this inspection relate to the appropriateness of some placements where some individuals refuse to engage with education or support packages. This places these individuals at risk as difficult behaviour has escalated resulting in serious safeguarding issues. There are eight young people accommodated in this home, some with very complex needs. Although some young people are involved in activities during the evening, rotas seen showed that on occasion there are only two staff rostered; this is insufficient. Medication prescribed should be given at regular intervals to ensure its efficacy. Although risk assessments are in place for individuals, there is no guidance to staff to demonstrate how the risk can be minimised. Some young people are reaching adulthood and there is no clear preparation for them to live independently.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals with religious and culturally appropriate needs provided for. A meal is always provided for those young people who are not in the home at meal times ensuring these individuals eat healthily. Young people have free access to the kitchen and are able to make snacks and drinks when they wish.

Young people's health needs are identified in their individual development plan (IDP). All outcomes of appointments are recorded. Appropriate services are sought for those young people who smoke and are involved with alcohol and illicit substances.

Medication records are in good order, although staff need to be more vigilant to ensure young people who are prescribed antibiotics take them regularly to ensure their efficacy. Agreements are in place for some young people to self-medicate. This is done with staff support ensuring young people take their medication as prescribed. All but one person has received first aid training ensuring a first aider is on duty at all times.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Information relating to young people is kept securely ensuring confidentiality. Young people have access to a phone and are able to make calls in private.

Young people confirm that they know how to make a complaint and are confident that any issues that they raise will be dealt with. The home maintains a complaints log as well as a 'moans and groans' book that records minor grievances. All such grievances are dealt with to the young people's satisfaction. An advocacy group is also available to the young people and staff have undertaken in-house training with this organisation.

All staff have received safeguarding training and have a good awareness of how young people can put themselves at risk. Staff are vigilant to promote the safeguarding of young people, but they are concerned over the well-being of some young people who put themselves at risk and feel unable to prevent this behaviour. Some behaviours have escalated with individuals being involved in petty offences, self-harming behaviours and alcohol misuse which has put some at risk of sexual exploitation. The use of computers is monitored closely to ensure young people do not make inappropriate contacts.

Young people confirm that there is no bullying and all feel safe in the home. Staff have recently attended in-house training on bullying to raise their awareness.

There are good protocols with the police in place with clear guidance to staff on what action to take when a young person fails to return to the home when expected. When young people return to the home staff ensure that they have eaten properly and are cared for appropriately.

Behaviour management plans are in place identifying triggers to behaviour with strategies in place to manage these behaviours. There have been no restraints recorded since the last inspection. All staff have attended behaviour management training to ensure that they are equipped to manage young people's behaviours. A number of sanctions are recorded. These are appropriate and young people are encouraged to sign. Young people confirm that staff treat them fairly. Although there are eight young people living at the home, it is quite well settled and staff speak positively about the young people they care for.

Risk assessments are in place for the premises and activities identifying the risk with strategies in place to minimise this risk. However, risk assessments for the young people, identify the risk but there is no clear guidance to staff on how this risk should be managed. All required health and safety checks are carried out and appropriate action taken if required. Fire records are in good order with fire drills held regularly including during the waking night staff shifts to ensure everybody knows what action to take in the event of a fire.

Although no new staff have been recruited to this home, the recruitment files were seen for all new staff employed to the residential services. There are robust recruitment systems in place ensuring only suitable people are employed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The home accesses a number of services to help meet the needs of the young people. For example, an individual from the drug and alcohol team works with some individuals to address these issues. An organisation working with young people who have been involved in sexual exploitation are involved with some individuals. The children and adolescent mental health service is involved with a number of individuals and staff also access this service to help them support young people. The home is also involved in a pilot scheme with ex-care leavers who are working with a sexual health organisation to work with young people. The Youth Offending Team works with some individuals to address their offending behaviours. The home has regular good key work sessions to help young people to discuss pertinent issues or to spend one-to-one time together.

However, the inspector is concerned that some individuals will not engage with these services or partake in education and it is apparent that their needs are not being met and outcomes for these individuals are poor.

The majority of young people are attending education and some individuals achieve well with the intention of going to university. The home works closely with education providers to ensure appropriate education is provided for the majority of the young people. Some individuals have extra tuition to help them to achieve their potential. An individual from the education department attends the home to support individuals with homework or individual lessons.

Young people are engaged in a number of activities, although the majority of them arrange their own free time. Some individuals play football regularly and attend a local gym. Some young people enjoy shopping and going to the cinema. Other activities include swimming, ice skating, horse riding and baking. Some young people are provided with funding to have driving lessons. The Registered Manager has organised for young people to have a trip away to celebrate the end of the school year.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Each young person has an individual development plan (IDP) clearly setting out their individual needs with guidance to staff to show how these needs are to be met. These IDPs are developed in line with the local authority care plan and young people are involved in formulating their plan.

Looked after children child care reviews are held as appropriate. The home produce a detailed report for the review and take contemporaneous notes at the meeting to ensure decisions taken may be promptly implemented. Young people attend their review meeting and are encouraged to fully participate to ensure their views are heard.

Contact arrangements are clearly set out in the young person's IDP. The home support young people to have contact with significant people. However, where the influence of contact has a negative impact upon individuals the home takes steps to minimise the effect of this; for example, by ensuring such contact is supervised. Young people are also encouraged to have friends visit them at the home.

The home has recently changed remit from a short-stay home to long-term provision. Great care has been taken to ensure that new admissions will not have a negative impact on the group of young people and vice versa. Good introductions and planning went into recent admissions which were reviewed to ensure suitability. Young people reaching adulthood are supported by the leaving care team who help identify appropriate move on placements. However, staff are adamant that young people will only move onto independence when they are ready to do so.

House meetings occur infrequently as young people do not wish to participate. However, young people confirmed that staff listen to them. Relationships between staff and young people were seen to be warm and nurturing.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The change in remit of the home has meant that a number of young people remain at the home until independence. This is a new departure for staff and young people are not been given the opportunity to develop their independent living skills. However, this has been recognised by the team who are sourcing information to remedy this situation.

Staff have worked hard in ensuring the home is well maintained and decorated and furnished to a good standard to ensure a homely environment. Young people have also been involved in developing the outside of the home where there are flower tubs and plants to enhance this area.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose is a comprehensive document informing all interested parties what can be expected from the home. The young people's guide gives young people a good idea of what they can expect when they come to live at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff access information to support unaccompanied young people, ensure interpreters are available and access additional educational support for individuals as required. Each young person has an individualised care plan setting out their needs.

All but three staff have attained National Vocational Qualification at level 3 or equivalent. These three individuals are registered on this qualification. There are good training opportunities for staff ensuring a competent staff team. The staff have developed good handover sessions

with details of all young people's appointments, activities and medication required, ensuring that young people receive appropriate support.

Rotas demonstrate that in the main there are sufficient staff to meet the needs of the young people. However, some shifts had only two staff working with eight young people which suggests that there are insufficient staff to meet the needs of all the young people.

There are good monitoring systems in place to ensure the home runs efficiently. However, some young people refuse to engage in any support package or education resulting in serious safeguarding issues which compromises their welfare. Although meetings are on-going regarding these individuals recommendations from professionals who consider that the home is unable to meet the needs of these young people have not been heeded.

Each young person has a log book which clearly identifies how they spend their time on a day-to-day basis. Young people's files are stored electronically, although hard copies are maintained of pertinent documents to ensure information is available to staff at all times.

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
17	promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated (Regulation 11 (1)(a))	1 August 2010
30	ensure there is at all times a sufficient number of staff working at the home (Regulation 25 (1))	1 August 2010
33	make proper provision for the care, education supervision and, where appropriate, treatment, of young people accommodated. (Regulation 11 (1)(b))	1 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people are given medication as prescribed (NMS 13.7)
- ensure risk assessments identify action to be taken in relation to young people to reduce risks to an acceptable level (NMS 26.2)
- prepare young people for leaving care by helping them develop practical, daily life knowledge and skills. (NMS 6.6)