

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC061005
Inspection date	29 September 2009
Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 January 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

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 Social Services Department. It provides accommodation for up to eight young people of either gender and 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 for. 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 key inspection was to check that the core national minimum standards and the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection have been met.

There are some good aspects to this home. There is a dedicated staff team who are firmly committed to the care and welfare of the young people living here. They have a commitment to ensure each individual is provided with a good education and ensure their religious and cultural needs are met.

The home is going through a stable period, most of the young people have lived here for a while and clearly see this as their home, this is reflected in the lack of damage to the fabric of the home. In response to this the communal areas of the home have been redecorated creating a comfortable and homely environment.

Although no requirements were made at this inspection a number of recommendations have been made that would improve the way the home operates.

The majority of these relate to having written plans for the young people, these include detailed health care plans, behaviour management plans and care plans that would give clear guidance of how the young person should be cared for.

If a child wishes to pursue a complaint further, systems should be in place to ensure that this happens.

Staff attending child care reviews should take contemporaneous notes to ensure decisions taken can be promptly implemented. Minutes of these reviews should be given to the young people in a form that they can easily understand.

Young people should be able to access all information written about them, to enable them to correct errors and add personal statements.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Staff have worked hard in addressing the actions of the last inspection and all have been met.

Medication records are in good order and young people are administered their medication according to their prescription. The Registered Manager monitors these records ensuring that they are in good order.

There are adequate numbers of staff employed in the home ensuring young people are cared for consistently.

There were a number of recommendations made at the last inspection and whilst some of these remain outstanding most have been met.

Personnel Education Plans are in place for the majority of young people or are in the process of being organised. This ensures the home are aware of the educational targets of the young people.

As all admissions have been planned there has not been a detrimental effect on the young people already there and new young people have settled in well.

The Statement of Purpose contains a staffing policy. The children's guide is work in progress, with young people involved in producing a meaningful document.

Staff receive regular supervision, and there is ongoing support from the staff team. This ensures that the home is working together for the benefit of the young people. The majority of staff have accessed medication training.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals and they confirm that the food is good. Individual likes and dislikes are catered for and young people help with meal preparation occasionally. Meal times are a social occasion with staff and young people eating together around the dining room table. During Ramadan night staff would ensure those young people who were fasting had a hearty meal before sunset and staff would eat with these individuals when they had their evening meal after sunset.

All the young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians. Details of immunisations and medical appointments are kept in young people's files. However, although the Individual Development Plan addresses some health needs this document lacks detail and does not address all the health needs of the individual. For example, files do not contain information about young people's smoking habits, although young people confirm that staff do discourage this and advise on smoking cessation.

All care staff have attended first aid training ensuring that a first aider is on duty at all times. The consent to emergency first aid and the administration of non-prescription medication has been obtained from the person with parental responsibility. Medication records are in good order ensuring that young people are administered their medication according to the prescription. Some individuals hold their own medication and an agreement is in place with these young people, ensuring that they take their medication appropriately.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The phone for young people's use is sited to afford privacy. Young people hold their key to their own bedroom. Young people's files are kept in a locked cabinet to ensure confidentiality.

Young people know how to complain and think that their complaints are listened to. Although the complaints record shows a young person wishing to take a complaint further, there was no evidence to show this happened.

Staff endeavour to ensure the safety of all the young people and liaise with appropriate organisations where young people are at risk of exploitation. Key work sessions address issues of personal safety and encourage young people to keep themselves safe. All staff have attended safeguarding training and are knowledgeable on the risk posed to many young people.

There are eight young people living at the home and at times there are disagreements between them. However, they confirm that they feel safe in the home and there is no bullying.

The home has changed its remit from a short-term unit to a long-term home. The absconding behaviour which has previously been a cause for concern has drastically reduced. Apart from the odd occasion, it is apparent that young people are committed to the home and are well settled and come home when expected. However, the home maintains good links with the Missing Person's Police Co-ordinator and appropriate action is taken when young people fail to return to the home when expected. Young people confirm when this happens staff phone them to establish their whereabouts and ensure their safety.

The home is settled and young people consider that they are treated fairly by the staff. There have been no restraints recorded for over a year. There are a number of sanctions and these are appropriate. Although staff said that behaviour management plans are produced to ensure a consistent approach to managing young people's behaviour, they are not in place for all the young people, which could lead to inconsistencies.

There are good risk assessments in place for individual young people, the premises and activities, identifying the risk with strategies to minimise this risk. All appropriate health and safety checks have been undertaken, for example, the water, gas installations and portable electrical appliances. Fire records are in good order with fire drills held at night to ensure all staff, including night staff know what action to take in the event of a fire.

Recruitment records were seen at the head office. There are robust systems in place ensuring that only suitable people are employed. Staff files are very well maintained and are easy to follow.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home accesses a number of services to help meet the needs of the young people. For example, some young people are referred to the children and adolescent mental health service (CAMHS). An individual from this team also attends staff meetings to offer support and guidance to the staff team on managing some individuals' behaviour. An organisation offering support to young people who are at risk of sexual exploitation is accessed for some individuals. The

Looked After Children nurse attends the home regularly and advises young people on a number of issues including sexual health.

For those young people where English is not their first language an interpreter has been accessed, although the need for this has greatly reduced. Support is given to young people where they are exploring their identity particularly in relationship to addressing ethnicity and religion. An Inter-faith centre is accessed to assist in this. Staff ensure that young people are provided with the essential requirements of their religion, for example, the Quaran and a prayer mat. The home also keeps a calendar of the prayer times ensuring all staff are aware. Staff maintain contact with some young people once they leave the home and some return to the home for visits or to attend celebrations.

The staff are committed to ensure young people access education. Taxis are arranged if necessary ensuring young people get to school on time. Exam timetables are produced ensuring every one knows when these are, this enables extra support to be given. Tutors are arranged for support for exams. Also the Education Department provides support to individuals where English is not the first language to improve on spoken language and reading. Staff work closely with schools particularly where young people refuse to go to school. Staff support young people to research further and higher education establishments and attend open days with the young people, this enables them to make realistic choices. Some young people have achieved good GCSE results and are attending sixth form and it is hoped that these individuals will go onto higher education. The home celebrates young people's educational achievements, they ensured the end of term ball was memorable, for example, by buying a ball gown and providing good transport for the occasion. If young people did not want to celebrate in this way they could choose an alternative like having driving lessons.

Many of the young people arrange their own activities, although the home has good links with other organisations, for example, the police and youth service, who organise activities. Some play football, go to the gym, others go horse riding and have many rosettes showing off their achievements at this sport. The home organised a holiday to Wales for a number of the young people and alternatives were provided for those young people who did not go. The home celebrates different festivals as well as the traditional Christmas, the home is having an Eid party where young people from other homes in the city are invited as well as past residents.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

The home's care plans are in the form of Individual Development Plans which should identify the individual needs of each young person and set out how these needs are to be met. However, these documents lack detail and it is not always clear what the particular needs are or how needs are to be met. Daily routines are set out to ensure consistency.

Child care reviews are generally held as required and the Registered Manager is proactive in trying to ensure that they are held as appropriate. However, although staff produce a detailed report and attend this meeting, contemporaneous notes are not taken and held on file to ensure that decisions taken are promptly implemented. Also, the nature of the formal minutes is not child friendly to enable young people to have a clear understanding of what has been said.

Contact arrangements are set out in the Individual Development Plan. Staff support young people in re-establishing contact with family members and will act as an advocate if appropriate.

Young people spoke positively about how staff have helped to make things better with their families.

The home is now a long-term unit and all moves into the home have been planned, this has resulted in a very stable home for the young people living there. However, as the home continues to have an emergency bed this stability could be compromised. As the nature of emergency admissions does not allow for consideration of the impact such an admission could have on the group of young people in residence.

Regular house meetings are held and young people confirm that staff listen to them.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

As the home has recently changed into a long-term unit staff are in the early stages of helping young people to prepare to live independently. Some young people go shopping with staff and help with meal preparation. The older young people are encouraged to do their own laundry.

Although this is a rather institutional building staff have worked hard on redecorating the communal lounge and dining room creating a homely and comfortable environment. Young people's bedrooms are pleasantly decorated in line with young people's wishes.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There is a comprehensive Statement of Purpose containing all the necessary information. The children's guide is an on-going project which, staff are working on with the young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. This is reflected in the support given to young people to ensure they have their religious and cultural needs met; to help young people to understand their identity and to have their individual wishes realised. This may be to have an expensive ball gown to attend their prom or to have driving lessons. This does not come from one or two members of staff but it is a team ethos to support the young people living at this home.

Staff receive regular supervision, there have been a number of new staff recruited, these individuals have had an in-depth induction and are to be registered on a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 imminently. There are good training opportunities for staff. Senior staff are undertaking NVQ at level 4 and the deputy is on a management training course. The Registered Manager is also embarking on a further management course at the local university.

There are adequate numbers of staff looking after the young people. The home employs waking night staff, this ensures that the day staff come on duty refreshed. The staff team reflect the religious, cultural or ethnicity of the young people placed and present as good role models.

The Registered Manager monitors the homes records and how the home functions.

The majority of information on young people is stored electronically. The home does maintain hardcopy of pertinent documents but there is some concern that a lot of personal information

is kept in the log book. The nature of this tome does not allow for the young people to have easy access to their records.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure each young person's physical, emotional and health needs are identified, and a health care plan is produced (NMS 12.1 & 12.2)
- ensure complaints are fully responded to (NMS 16.1)
- the Registered Person should take appropriate action to ensure follow up action is taken on individual complaints as required (NMS 16.7)
- ensure behaviour management plans are in place for all the young people (NMS 22.16)
- ensure the placement plan sets out clearly the assessed needs of the individual and how these needs are to be met on a day to day basis (NMS 2.1)
- ensure that contemporaneous notes of the childcare review are held on the young person's file (NMS 3.4)
- ensure minutes of childcare reviews are communicated to the young people in a form best suited to the young person (NMS 3.6)
- ensure young people can have access to their personal records (NMS 35.1 & 2).