

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Thomas Webber
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	28 July 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 provides care and accommodation for up to four young people, male and female, aged 10 to 16 years with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The purpose and function of the home is to return young people to their parental home or to identified foster placements or a settled care environment.

The premises are situated on a large estate surrounded by similar style family homes. The home is a purpose-built property which is well resourced.

Summary

This unannounced, key inspection took place over one day. The inspection covered all of the children's homes key standards. This forms part of the annual inspection programme to examine the standard of care and services provided to young people. At the time of inspection, four young people were accommodated.

Although the overall quality rating is satisfactory, this is primarily due to the continued absence of a Registered Manager and significant deficiencies in the recording of some records. The home does, however, continue to provide a good standard of care to young people which was confirmed by young people spoken to.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has addressed one of the two actions made at the last inspection. This related to ensuring that the home is suitably furnished and decorated. The outstanding action relates to the completion of the sanctions and restraint logs.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home continues to encourage young people to eat healthily. A satisfactory and varied menu is established in consultation with young people which provides them with a choice at all mealtimes. The menu caters for young people's preferences as well as providing them with the opportunity to try different cultural meals. Individual records are also maintained which records meals offered, eaten and refused by young people. However, these are not always recorded in sufficient detail. A selection of fresh fruit and juices are readily available to young people on a daily basis. Young people commented very positively about the quality and quantity of meals offered to them.

Young people live in a healthy environment where their health care needs are met. Young people access the various health care services such as doctors, dentists, opticians as well as receiving specialist input to meet their specific needs. Staff support and accompany young people to their health care appointments and suitable records are maintained of these visits. Signed medical consent forms and looked after children health assessments are established for young people.

Safe medication storage practices are maintained with all medication being kept securely in facilities in line with best practice. Appropriate systems and records are maintained for administration of medication with staff being responsible for the administering of medication to young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff actively promote the rights of young people by ensuring that their privacy and dignity is respected. Young people's records are kept secure and staff understand the need to keep their information confidential whilst being clear about the limits of confidentiality.

Clear policies and procedures are established for dealing with any complaints. Staff support young people to raise any issues of concern openly and the process of making a complaint is clearly understood by them. Young people feel confident in discussing any concerns or complaints with staff. The home has continued to receive no complaints.

Young people live in a safe environment where their welfare is promoted and they are protected from abuse. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place in respect to child protection with all staff having either received child protection training or are booked to attend a course. A clear system is established to ensure that staff receive regular ongoing refresher training in this area of practise.

An anti-bullying policy is established which is conveyed to the young people on admission. Effective systems are established to challenge and deal with any incidents of bullying which focuses on its effects and to seek a resolution. A points system is also established to minimise incidents of bullying. All incidents are suitably recorded.

A clear system is also established for the reporting and recording of any event where young people go absent without authority.

Clear routines and boundaries are established together with encouragement, reinforcement and positive behaviour incentives to assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff challenge any negative behaviour of young people, their effects and ways of limiting these with sanctions and physical intervention being used where necessary. However, there are significant deficiencies in the recording of these records. Staff are trained in the use of physical intervention training. Physical intervention plans are established for young people. However, detailed individual behaviour management plans are not established to provide staff with clear guidance on how to effectively manage challenging behaviour.

The health and safety policy and practice guidelines within the home are robust to ensure that the staff and young people are appropriately safeguarded. Young people and staff regularly practise fire evacuation procedures and the various fire safety records are suitably maintained with the exception of the regular testing of the emergency lighting.

The authority has established robust staff recruitment practices for the careful selection and vetting of all new staff to ensure the protection of young people. New staff do not commence employment in the home until all the relevant checks have been carried out.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive the level of support based on their specific needs by a committed staff team. Other professional support is also provided to young people where this is specifically identified. Young people are allocated a key worker which provides them with regular individual support. This enables them to air their views and encourages young people to talk about any issues of concern.

Staff actively promote and support young people to maintain their educational placements. However, the attendance of young people does vary. Staff support young people with their homework and there are suitable facilities within the home to assist with private study. Staff attend young people's progress meetings and other relevant activities held at their respective schools as part of celebrating their successes. Good communication and liaison is maintained between the staff and schools. Personal education plans are established for young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Opportunities are available for young people to make pre-visits to the home prior to admission. All young people are provided with a care plan. This together with other relevant documentation maintained by the home provides sufficient information on how the care needs of young people are met on a day-to-day basis. Young people's placements are routinely reviewed and they are supported and encouraged to attend either the whole or part of their review, depending on their particular circumstances. All other relevant parties are also invited to attend young people's statutory reviews.

Staff are committed to supporting young people to maintain the level of agreed contact between themselves and their family members according to their individual circumstances. Staff provide support to young people and their families to ensure that the contact arrangements are safe, constructive and a positive experience for all concerned. The home also provides transport and undertakes the lead role for contact visits where this is deemed necessary. Records of contact arrangements are suitably maintained. Suitable arrangements are established for young people to meet with visitors and to make and receive telephone calls in private.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions and contribute to and influence the way the home is run. This is achieved through regular key worker sessions and on a day-to-day basis. Intermittent house meetings are established which provide young people to raise and discuss issues relating to the home. Young people's questionnaires have been recently introduced as part of the home's quality assurance system, which provides them with the opportunity to comment on the care and services provided.

Young people live in a caring and supportive environment where positive relationships exist between the staff and young people. A friendly and relaxed atmosphere has been created where young people are able to freely express their views about any issues. Staff carry out their duties in a warm and caring manner where young people are relaxed and at ease in the company of staff. Young people commented very positively about the care and support provided to them by the staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people live in a caring, welcoming and homely environment which is maintained to a good standard, being clean, tidy and comfortable. It is also furnished and decorated to a good standard and considerable improvements have been made to enhance the living environment of the young people. Young people are provided with sufficient communal space to meet their individual and collective needs. Young people are also provided with their own bedrooms which include en suite facilities. Young people's bedrooms are personalised to their individual tastes and suitable locks are fitted to their bedroom doors. The premises also provide young people with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Diversity and equality are promoted well in all aspects of the service. Policies and procedures relating to equal opportunities are well established. The home promotes diversity and tolerance taking into account the individual needs of young people.

A clear Statement of Purpose is established which describes the level of service provided to young people. Copies of this document are readily available on request to all interested parties. A Young People's Guide is also produced which provides young people with information they need to know about the home. Young people are given a copy of this document on their pre-visit to the home or on admission depending on the status of their admission.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are themselves properly managed and supported in safeguarding and promoting young people's welfare. Various forums are established to ensure that staff are kept up to date with regard to any issues pertaining to the home and young people. These include regular staff meetings and daily handover meetings. Formal individual supervision is provided to staff, although not all staff receive this at the recommended intervals.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who are competent and trained to meet their needs. An induction programme is provided to all new staff. Staff are supported to increase their knowledge and expertise by attending a range of training courses. The minimum ratio of 80% of the staff team have not achieved the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. This is due to some changes within the existing team. The organisation are working proactively to achieve a fully qualified workforce.

The home is committed to providing sufficient staff on duty to meet the individual and collective needs of young people. It provides a minimum of two members of care staff on duty during the day and three in the evenings. Two members of staff sleep in each night. The manager's hours are additional to these staffing levels. Young people are cared for by a stable staff team who have a variety of experience. Staff undertake a multi-purpose role in carrying out most aspects of care to young people.

The authority ensures that the care and welfare of young people is continually monitored through monthly unannounced visits undertaken by various team managers within the authority.

Reports are produced outlining these visits and any action needed to improve the outcomes for young people.

The home has operated without a Registered Manager since January 2009. Although arrangements were in place to address this deficiency, the person appointed resigned after a short period of time. Currently the home is managed between the two assistant unit managers with the support of the home's line manager. An advert is due to be placed to appoint an acting manager for the home.

Young People's records are stored securely and reflect their individual needs, how these are met and the progress achieved in accordance with Schedule 3.

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
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline, a full written record is maintained with reference to all sanctions and physical interventions (Regulation 17(4))	11 January 2010
34	ensure that the registered provider appoints an individual to manage the home. (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 record of menus demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet with particular reference to maintaining detailed records of meals offered, eaten and refused by young people (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that clear written policies, procedures and guidance are established in the form of individual behaviour management plans for young people (NMS 22.2)
- ensure that there is regular testing of the emergency lighting (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that all staff receive formal individual supervision at the recommended intervals (NMS 28.2)
- ensure that a minimum ration of 80% of all care staff have completed the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Care of Children and Young People. (NMS 29.5)