

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	6 July 2010
Inspector	Steve Pearson
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	14 January 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

The home is run by a private company and provides care and accommodation for up to five young people aged from 12 to 17 years old. It is located in the suburbs of a large town and comprises three floors, an enclosed rear garden and a double garage. The ground floor comprises of a kitchen, dining room, lounge, another room used for doing school work and a toilet. On the first floor, there are four bedrooms and a family sized bathroom. On the second floor, there are a further two bedrooms and a shower room. Each young person has their own single bedroom.

The home is close to local shops and bus routes are nearby if young people wish to visit the town centre with its larger shops, cinema and leisure facilities.

At the time of the inspection, five young people were living at the home and two of them spoke to the inspector about the care they receive.

Summary

This was an unannounced, interim inspection and it assessed the key national minimum standards associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe.

As this was an interim inspection, it did not assess all of the key national minimum standards. Consequently there was not enough evidence to assess or amend the overall outcome judgement made at the previous full inspection.

The Registered Manager and staff are effective at promoting the safety of young people. They promote privacy and confidentiality appropriately, they receive regular training in safeguarding young people's welfare and the home is maintained as safe premises. However, the recording of complaints, physical interventions and sanctions do not lead to full accountability. Recruitment procedures also do not meet legal requirements concerning the necessary checks and records to be held.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Ofsted did not make any requirements or recommendations at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have the privacy they need when they need it. They have lockable bedrooms and the staff are aware of the duty to pass on information if their welfare is at risk. Occasionally the staff have to search young people's bedrooms if there is cause for concern. However, these occasions are not always recorded in a manner which would provide for fully accountability. For example, even though the young person may have been present, they are not being offered the opportunity to sign the records.

The Registered Manager and staff fully promote opportunities for young people to raise concerns. There is a formal complaints procedure and this is well publicised on the young people's notice board and in the children's guide. Young people are also well informed about advocacy services and are offered excellent support in contacting external agencies such as Ofsted. Young people feel they raise concerns with the staff, for example, one young person said 'if we are unhappy about something we'd tell the staff and they'd sort it'. One formal complaint has been made since the previous inspection. However, this has not been recorded in a manner which promotes full accountability. For example, the details of the investigation and the outcome are not clear.

All staff receive regular training in how to safeguard the welfare of young people. Some of this training is provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board which helps to ensure it is up-to-date and independent. The staff are aware of their duties to pass on welfare concerns to their seniors and to external agencies.

There is no bullying in the children's home. Young people said 'there's no bullying but we do argue sometimes' and the staff also confirmed it was not an issue of concern. Risk assessments are in place to evaluate how likely bullying is to occur and what should be done to reduce any risks further.

An appropriate recording system is in place should any young person go missing or fail to return to the home on time. Suitable policies and procedures are also in place.

Sometimes the staff use sanctions in response to young people's behaviour and young people said these sanctions were fair. The staff use sanctions minimally and prefer to use rewards and praise in order to promote positive behaviour. Sometimes they restrain young people if they are a threat to themselves or others. Such occasions are not always recorded fully and so accountability is not at an acceptable level. For example, young people are not offered the opportunity to add their own views (or have them recorded) and signature in the bound book of restraints. Additionally, the Registered Manager is not adding his own comments about appropriateness of each use of sanction or restraint together with any subsequent action taken.

The home itself is maintained as safe premises. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. The Registered Manager and staff help young people to be aware of how to respond in the event of a fire. For example, one young person said 'we get fire drills quite often and have to leave by the nearest door and wait outside'. The Registered Manager fully assesses the needs of any young person who is being considered for admission to the home. He then balances such needs against the needs of the current group of residents. This helps him to then make appropriate decisions about admissions to the home.

The staff check the identity of visitors to the home and record their details in the visitors book. Nobody may work at the home until they have completed a range of checks including relating to any criminal convictions or cautions, references and an interview. However, the full range of checks are not being carried out. For example, the records show that not all the staff have a full employment history with satisfactory explanations for any gaps in the history. Additionally a record, where possible, of proof of identity which includes a photograph is not being maintained. Overall, therefore, the recruitment system is not as robust as is required by legislation.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
27	ensure full and satisfactory information is available for each member of staff including proof of identity which includes a photograph and a full employment history with a satisfactory written explanation of any gaps in employment (reg 26)(3)(d)	3 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 offered the opportunity to sign the records of room searches (NMS 9.8)
- ensure the details of investigations of complaints and their outcomes are clear (NMS 16.3)
- record any comments on the appropriateness of individual uses of sanctions or use of restraint, together with any subsequent action taken. (NMS 22.11)