

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Kevin Whatley
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 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 setting is one of three homes operated by the same organisation. The home aims to provide a holistic approach to the welfare and development of young people in their care, accommodating six young people on a planned or emergency basis between the ages of 12 to 17 years on admission. All young people living at the home will have experienced difficulties in their lives. The service benefits from good transport and access to local amenities and services.

Summary

This key inspection was unannounced taking place on a weekday. Young people clearly benefit from having their dietary and health care needs met extremely well, while the approach taken in respect of meeting their emotional needs is outstanding. Rigorous and comprehensive safeguarding policies and practices ensure young people are as safe as can be. The standard of interventions aimed at assisting young people to reduce their particularly negative, self harmful and problematic behaviours is excellent. Young people receive outstanding individual support, advice and guidance to meet their needs which in turn helps them to gain a much higher sense of self esteem and self worth. The home provides a good standard of accommodation. The home is managed excellently with young people clearly the paramount concern. The staff team are committed and knowledgeable, being extremely well guided and supported to continue providing a high standard of care.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy and balanced diet and to contribute to their own meal planning. Care plans clearly describe the types of food each young person likes or dislikes with appropriate guidance for staff in the event of them having poor or concerning eating habits. Young people who are engaged in pathway plans are assisted to plan, budget, prepare and cook their own meals.

The health care needs of each young person are properly assessed and considered. Each young person has a health care plan that highlights their physical, medical and emotional needs. Health care plans include immunisation histories, previous and current medical matters and how these need to be met. All young people are registered with local doctors and dentists and are encouraged to attend routine appointments such as the required looked after child medicals. Staff promote healthy lifestyles including appropriate sexual health, personal care and physical wellbeing. Most recently staff have attended a smoking cessation course to assist young people to consider giving up. Where specialist advice, guidance and intervention is needed health care professionals are sought and engaged.

Young people have their emotional needs met particularly well. All care plans place considerable emphasis on addressing emotional well-being including issues such as mental health difficulties.

Good liaison is maintained with other health care professionals to ensure a joined-up approach is in place. Since the last inspection the organisation have employed an in-house psychotherapist who is able to provide programmes of interventions very quickly. Young people feel this helps them to consider their feelings really well. Staff are proactive and positive in engaging young people in addressing how they see themselves, such as in relation to ideas of poor self image and insecurity.

The storage and administration of medicines is extremely good with young people having their medication stored and given to them safely. Consents for the giving of medication, first aid and emergency treatment are in place with staff receiving up-to-date training should the need arise. Excellent procedures ensure all medicines given are monitored closely, such as paracetamol, to ensure any patterns of requests made by young people are swiftly identified. Records of medication kept at the home are accurate with regular stock checks being completed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people feel they have their privacy respected fully, while information concerning them is stored securely in the office. Staff were observed to knock on bedroom doors before entering and did not discuss particular young person issues outside of the office. Toilets and bathrooms offer sufficient privacy.

A robust complaints procedure is in place which is made known to young people as soon as they arrive both verbally and within the young person's guide. Details of how young people can complain are displayed openly around the home with information relating to independent advocacy services readily available. Young people felt they could express their views easily and talk to staff whenever they needed to. No complaints have been made since the last inspection and none have been received by Ofsted.

Comprehensive policies and procedures are in place to ensure young people are kept as safe as possible from the risks of harm, neglect or abuse. All staff undertake child protection training and now attend refresher training on an annual basis. Staff displayed a sound and knowledgeable understanding of key child protection matters. Young people who have any historical or burgeoning issues which have placed, or may place themselves at risk have these assessed and incorporated into their plans of care. Swift and thoughtful liaison with all outside agencies responsible for keeping young people safe is sought and maintained whenever necessary. No members of staff work at the home unless all the required checks have been confirmed and considered.

The challenging, negative or risky behaviours of all young people are rigorously risk assessed. Such behaviours including self harm, aggression and violence are implemented in individual behaviour management plans which provide a clear and obvious guide for staff to follow. All staff are suitably trained in the use of physical intervention with any incidents being thoroughly reviewed and considered. The ethos of the home is to engage young people in dialogue wherever possible and to continually seek alternatives to actual restraints being necessary. The use of restraint since the last inspection is very low.

A clear process is in place regarding the giving of sanctions which are well known by young people. Staff are encouraged to consider alternatives to the implementation of punitive sanctions including using the ideals of restorative justice. Such an approach allows young people the

chance to consider giving something back to those affected by their actions, for instance, helping to decorate the home environment after damaging furniture.

Behaviours such as being absent without authority are addressed in depth with appropriate protocols in place to respond to such events. Close liaison with the local police and regular meetings with the police community support officer ensures young people have their particular vulnerabilities well known.

A zero tolerance approach to negative peer behaviours such as bullying, coupled with good numbers of staff ensures incidents of this nature are rare. When they do occur young people are given considerable support and guidance to think about their behaviours and how this affects others. No young people raised concerns that they were being bullied.

Excellent intervention strategies have led to significant improvements for young people who had been placing themselves at risk of harm. Young people are provided with consistent boundaries from staff in line with their own individual behaviour plans. Staff consistently encourage young people to address their problematic behaviours through discussion, considering alternatives and continued positive reinforcement. Young people have their behaviours linked to an incentive programme with their actions and efforts being considered daily. The incentive programme has been improved further with the introduction of a morning and afternoon assessment process. This now allows young people greater opportunities to address their behaviour throughout the day and to turn potentially negative situations into positive outcomes. Staff liaise regularly with external agencies, including the local youth offending team, to ensure young people are assisted to address any criminal related behaviours.

The health and safety of all those who live and work at the home are addressed appropriately. The routine checking, testing and servicing of fire fighting and electrical equipment takes place at regular intervals. Fire alarm drills are carried out regularly with all young people and staff taking part. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to address the whole living environment.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their individual needs met in an excellent fashion. Consistently high levels of support are provided with key working playing a fundamental role in the service. Young people clearly engage in the process with staff providing them with care, support and guidance to match their individual circumstances. Staff clearly understand the particular needs of young people extremely well while young people clearly benefit from one-to-one support offered by their key workers. Regular sessions ensure young people have every opportunity to address their own behaviours, feelings and thoughts in a sensitive manner. Additional expert advice and guidance is provided by the in-house psychotherapist, culminating in a holistic care approach. Young people say they feel 'really looked after' and that staff know them 'very well'.

Staff display considerable understanding of each young person's physical, medical and social care needs with a notable focus on their emotional well-being. Young people are encouraged to participate in the development of their individual care plans and sign to agree to the boundaries and expectations of behaviour. Routine child focus meetings review the individual progress of each young person with comprehensive care planning responding to changing needs and circumstance.

A positive learning culture encourages young people to engage in their education. Each young person has a personal education plan that clearly defines the type of programme they should be receiving. Close liaison with local authorities ensures that the correct type of provision is sought for each individual young person. Since the last inspection the organisation have employed the services of more home tutors which ensures young people receive education swiftly at the home if plans are not in place via their local authority. A new education room is being completed which will allow for a more focused and dedicated space to be available for home tuition.

Young people benefit from living in a home where activities occur routinely. Staff display a high level of motivation and enthusiasm which in turn encourages young people to participate in the things they enjoy or are interested in. Regular visits take place to local places of interest, the cinema and leisure centres to participate in sport. Incentive plans now include engaging in activities every day, whether this be in the house with staff playing a board game or going to the gym. Wherever possible the individual interests of young people are supported and facilitated such as going horse riding.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Wherever possible all placements are planned in advance, although robust assessment protocols and procedures ensure young people can be accommodated at short notice. Young people are only admitted into the home once a full and comprehensive assessment of their care needs has been completed.

Rigorous assessments are made on all relevant and available information regarding the physical, social, behavioural and emotional needs of the individual young person. Such assessments are incorporated into plans of care which highlight the individual needs of every young person in line with placement planning. Care plans clearly guide staff in meeting the individual needs of each young person. The organisation utilise the services of an in-house psychotherapist to provide advice and specific intervention programmes such as therapy and counselling.

Care plans provide an excellent and comprehensive assessment and planning framework which cover every aspect of care provision. Such plans are completed under the Every Child Matters descriptors and clearly show what the individual needs of young people are and how they should be met and reviewed. Young people help to complete some of the sections once they are in placement and are encouraged to agree and sign them.

Regular reviews of care ensure each care plan matches the current needs of each young person in an individualised fashion. The whole staff team contribute to routine child focus meetings where any change to each young person's circumstance, behaviour or emotional well being are considered fully. Excellent reviews of care focus on the progress of the respective young person against their care plan, these being completed under the Every Child Matters descriptors. Similar reports are provided for statutory looked after children reviews with young people being supported to attend and participate.

The particulars of any agreed contact arrangements are recorded in detail being clearly known by staff and the young person concerned. Risk assessments are completed for such visits and updated when and if necessary. Excellent records are kept of every contact which provides a clear picture of the circumstance of visits and their outcome.

Young people are given every possible opportunity to express their views and to contribute to the day-to-day running of the home. House meetings take place regularly with staff facilitating a more formal way of involving young people in the issues of the home. House meetings form a routine aspect of living at the home. The atmosphere within the setting is open and relaxed with young people clearly feeling comfortable to say what they feel to staff in an informal manner. Clear details of advocacy services are displayed around the home should young people choose to contact more independent agencies.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The changing and developing needs of young people as they approach adulthood are met extremely well. Staff provide advice, support and guidance for practical issues such as learning to cook, shop and budget. Personal matters such as relationships, hygiene and safe sexual health are addressed appropriately and sensitively. The home has developed their own life-skills programme which can be implemented whenever it is jointly agreed by the young person, staff and placing authorities. This occurs in addition to any pathway planning and thus provides a key assessment process to pathway plans when they are put in place. Young people are supported to take responsibility for their own lifestyles and to consider alternatives to behaviours or situations which may result in poor outcomes. Young people feel they are given the right amount of space to make informed and age-appropriate choices, while being encouraged to follow and engage in agreed life-skills programmes.

The home provides young people with a comfortable and relaxed place to live within a homely environment. All areas of the home were found to be in a reasonable condition being well maintained throughout. Young people are able to personalise their own bedrooms and are clearly proud of their efforts and choices. Communal areas offer young people sufficient space and comfort with all modern entertainment items being available. Since the last inspection a redecoration programme has begun with flooring and furniture being replaced. A number of other areas yet to be redecorated appear somewhat tired and worn, although the on-going refurbishment plan is due to address this.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Comprehensive information is provided for young people and others which clearly describes the setting and the services it offers. The Statement of Purpose is up-to-date clearly outlining all aspects of care provision. Young people have their own guide which is easy to understand.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people play an integral and important role in contributing to the manner in which they are cared for. The individual needs of each young person are clearly taken seriously and acted upon. When young people struggle in statutory education or if there are delays in programmes being provided, they are given home tuition which matches their particular needs. The staff team is made up of a good gender balance.

The numbers of staff on duty at any one time meet the assessed needs of young people living at the home. The staff team is very settled, consisting of suitably qualified and experienced practitioners; one care staff vacancy has recently been filled pending appropriate checks being confirmed. This will see the staff team with a full complement.

New staff undertake an induction programme which focuses on all key areas of care provision alongside supportive guidance from senior staff and their peers. All staff receive regular supervision which they say is meaningful and productive. Staff feel morale within the team is extremely good with excellent support and guidance being provided.

The management approach in running the home is extremely good. Since the last inspection a new acting manager has been appointed; an application for the acting manager to be registered as manager is in the process of being completed. The setting continues to be run for the benefit of young people with the organisation striving to improve all aspects of service provision. The senior staff team remains hugely experienced while a senior manager within the organisation has taken up a strategic role to ensure consistency across all their settings.

A rigorous monitoring process ensures all aspects of care provision are regularly considered and assessed, with staff being encouraged and guided to provide continuity and quality of care. The organisation carry out the required monthly monitoring inspections which are comprehensive, objective and self evaluative.

All records seen which are required to be kept, clearly reflect the progress and development of each young person placed at the setting, these being accurate and up to date.

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 the current plan of redecoration is completed (NMS 24.3)
- ensure the organisation put forward an application for the acting manager to be registered with Ofsted as manager for the setting. (NMS 34.3)