

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Monica Farrimond
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 December 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 is a children's home for three young people, from 10 to 17 years old who may have emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is a semi detached house and its location enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, a railway station, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres, the beach and parks.

At the time of the inspection, three young people were accommodated; two of the young people contributed information for this report.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced full inspection was to inspect all the key national minimum standards to assess how well the home supports children and young people placed there. In addition, the recommendation made at the previous inspection was reviewed.

Monitoring and management of the home is inadequate. The home does not have documentation in place for the young people accommodated to identify needs or to review their progress and development. Communication between the manager and placing authorities is poor, which does not ensure consistency of approach, to the care, documentation and review of the progress of the young people. The home does not support young people's health care needs to a satisfactory standard. There is inadequate information in relation to the health needs, risk assessments and placement plans of the young people accommodated. Bullying is identified as an issue by young people living at the home, and has not been satisfactorily addressed. Therefore, the home does not satisfactorily protect the welfare of the young people. There are eleven actions and three recommendations made following this inspection.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The manager had been asked to ensure that the interior and exterior of the home be maintained in a good state of structural repair; this issue had been addressed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is inadequate.

All staff are trained in food hygiene, ensuring that safety standards are observed in the kitchen. Young people involved in the preparation of their own meals are supervised by qualified staff to ensure food is handled hygienically and safely. Young people are involved with choosing what they want to eat and independence training is promoted for young people nearing the age when they will move on from the home. This ensures that young people have the skills of budgeting and cooking for themselves, prior to moving on to live independently. However arrangements for dining are inadequate; the dining table is used by staff to carry out handover, carry out observations and complete paper work; the dining room is used as an extension to the small office area; thus facilities are not conducive to encouraging a comfortable relaxed dining experience. This does not promote orderly, well managed, social occasions when meals are served in this environment.

Young people's health needs are not identified in health or placement plans; therefore staff are not fully aware of the health needs of the young people. This does not promote good, safe practice in relation to meeting health needs. Young people's health and welfare are not closely monitored by staff, to ensure that good health is promoted. If health care needs are not identified and documented during the initial stages of a placement, progress and development of health care issues cannot be monitored effectively. This leads to a lack of uniform guidance from staff in relation to vital health care advice. This is dangerous, particularly with conditions such as asthma and allergies. All young people are registered with local health facilities. All staff are trained in first aid and can respond to minor injuries, prior to seeking professional medical advice. All staff have received training in the storage and safe administration of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

The home has policies and procedures in place to ensure that the staff are aware of the importance of promoting and respecting the privacy of young people. However, the dining room of the home is used to update documentation relating to the young people and therefore this information can be seen by other young people, and compromises confidentiality.

The service has a complaints procedure, and observations of previous complaints show that complaints are responded to promptly, however, not all complaints are recorded appropriately, which does not reassure the young people that their complaints are taken seriously. Young people know the complaints procedure but they are not confident that any complaint they make will be taken seriously. This does not reassure young people that their concerns and opinions are valued.

There are limited systems in place to promote the safety and welfare of young people or to ensure they are protected from abuse. There is poor communication between placing authorities and the home, and this compromises the safety of the young people. There is no evidence of review meeting minutes, which further impacts on the welfare of the young people. The progress and development of young people is not monitored and recorded in comprehensive placement plans and risk assessments, this leads to vulnerable young people being placed at risk. The lack of thorough, comprehensive placement plans and risk assessments makes it difficult for staff to identify and put in place strategies to keep the young people safe. Consequently young people's welfare is not safeguarded and promoted. There are protocols for the staff to follow when a young person goes missing from the home, but they are not sufficiently detailed to ensure the best support to a young person when they are missing from the home.

Sanctions given to the young people by the staff are fair and there are very few incidents of physical restraint. The home does not have a written policy for the prevention of bullying or dealing with an allegation of bullying; this leads to different approaches by staff and does not ensure that bullying will be satisfactorily identified and addressed.

Recruitment policies and procedures are followed for staff working at the home. All the relevant documentation regarding recruitment is maintained at the main office of the organisation and individual staff files contain all information as identified in Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. All visitors to the home are required to sign the visitors' book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Staff at the home try to provide individual support and guidance to the young people at the home by talking and spending time with them. However, this time can be limited owing to the demands of other young people during a busy shift. Some young people say that they feel that they are generally well supported. However, individual needs, are not documented in placement plans. Therefore a consistent approach by all the staff team to issues relating to care, health, or education is not possible. If a consistent approach is not taken by all staff, development of the young people's progress and related shortfalls cannot be monitored. For example, mutually agreed targets and goals for young people's educational needs are not documented or reviewed.

The promotion of education has not been identified or documented as an essential element of the young people's care, therefore, the educational welfare of the young people accommodated is not promoted. This is partly due to young people's care plans being out of date and issues around education, and practical ways of supporting young people's education have not been addressed. Consequently, the young people's needs, achievements and aspirations are not promoted as part of their preparation for moving on to independence and adulthood.

The young people are encouraged to take part in a range of activities and leisure interests to promote confidence and develop new skills; a holiday in Turkey is imminent, and this experience will further promote the young people's life experiences. However, leisure interests in which a young person has talents or abilities are not documented within placement plans; there is no evidence that they are discussed at review meetings, and therefore it is not possible to assess whether a young person's interests and skills are fully explored and needs met.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Individual up-to-date placement plans are not in place for the young people. This means that the home does not have a clear process in place for meeting the individual needs of those young people. The way in which the home and placing authorities function, does not enhance the young people's development or enable the staff to support young people into their next placement. There is no evidence on young people's files to suggest that they have statutory reviews undertaken within a clear timescale, and when reviews have taken place there is no evidence of outcomes recorded; thus new goals and needs of the young people, identified following a review, are not incorporated into comprehensive placement plans. Inadequate management oversight has not identified the needs to improve placement plans and risk assessments.

Contact arrangements for young people are not clearly documented in placements plans; inadequate information supplied by the placing authority exacerbates the risks to young people's welfare and limits the young people's independence and opportunities to make choices in everyday life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

The staff encourage and support young people to take responsibility for their actions and to develop adult responsibilities. However, independent living skills are not documented in plans

drawn up by the home, in conjunction with the young person; thus it is difficult to monitor the progress of a young person in this area.

Young people generally experience an environment that is comfortable and pleasant. Bedrooms and the lounge are decorated and furnished to an adequate standard. However, the home's office space, used to store all documentation relating to the young people, the home's policies and procedures, staff files and other statutory guidance to staff, is so small and limited, that some of this documentation is to be found on the dining room table; the dining room looks like an extension to the office, with some book shelves containing documents relating to social care; thus this room is not currently fit for purpose.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The service has a Statement of Purpose that sets out how young people will be cared for when they stay at the home. The young person's guide to the service is produced in a child-friendly format, giving young people a clear and detailed picture of how the home works and who will be looking after them during their stay.

Staff are supervised within the preferred timescales, thus personal development and training needs are identified. Staff are encouraged to attend appropriate training to assist them to promote the welfare of young people accommodated at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. The manager and staff are not knowledgeable of their responsibilities within equality and diversity legislation and good practice. The lack of placement plans and outcomes of review meetings impacts on the identification of individual needs of the young people, and the monitoring of progress young people make during their stay at the home. Staff demonstrate a commitment to supporting young people, however, inadequate information about young people prevents them from promoting the welfare of the young people effectively.

The management of the home, and monitoring by the manager is inadequate. Improvements needed to the quality of care and poor working practices are not identified. Regulation 33 monitoring visits to the home are being undertaken and reports issued to the home. However, both Regulation 33 reports and Regulation 34 monitoring of the home is inadequate and does not identify or evidence concerns in relation to the placement of the young people. The reports do not address or action serious shortfalls in the documentation required to promote the welfare of the young people; these shortfalls seriously compromise young people's safety and welfare and fail to ensure that their needs are met.

All young people have their own individual care files. However, the files are not all complete and do not include all information as identified in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidentiality is compromised by the use of the dining room table to carry out administrative tasks relating to the young people's files and other statutory documents, and the use of the home's two telephones by staff to report or receive confidential information. These tasks rely on the young people's compliance to either move to another part of the home, or eat in another part of the home whilst reviews or meeting take place.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
10	ensure that there adequate communal space for sitting, recreation and dining (Regulation 31(7)(a))	20 September 2010
13	ensure that each child is provided with guidance, support and advice on health and personal care issues appropriate to his needs and wishes (Regulation (20 (2) (d))	20 September 2010
2	ensure that there is an up-to-date placement plan for each child or young person accommodated at the home setting out how he or she will be cared for, their welfare safeguarded and promoted in the home, arrangements for their health care and education and any arrangements made for contact with parents relatives and friends (Regulation 12(1))	20 September 2010
16	maintain a record of all complaints made by children and young people in the home and actions taken as a result (Regulation 24 (5))	20 September 2010
26	ensure that unnecessary risks to the health and safety of children accomodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated (Regulation 23(c))	20 September 2010
18	ensure there is a written policy for (a) the prevention of bullying in the children's home which shall in particular set out the procedure for dealing with with an allegation of bullying (Regulation 16 (4))	20 September 2010
19	ensure there is a procedure to be followed when any child accomodated in a children's home is absent without authority (Regulation 16 (4) (b))	20 September 2010
3	undertake regular reviews of each child's placement plan (Regulation 12(2))	20 September 2010
33	establish and maintain a system for (a) monitoring the matters set out in Schedule 6 at appropriate intervals; and (b) improving the quality of care provided in the children's home (Regulation 34)	20 September 2010
35	ensure that all children's files contain the information as identified in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. (Regulation 28 (1) (a)(b))	20 September 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that children's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled (NMS 9)
- ensure that when a child is likely to go missing, the registered person has agreed procedures to follow to monitor the child and to specify how the child may be prevented from leaving the home. Any such measures must be used as agreed in the child's placement plan (NMS 19.8)
- ensure that there is a comprehensive plan for young people preparing to leave care and to move into independent or semi-independent living, which specifies the support and assistance they will need to receive to enable a successful transition into adulthood, and which is implemented in practice. (NMS 6.1)