

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nick Veysey
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Date of last inspection	4 August 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 up to three young people from 10 years old up to 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties, or learning disabilities.

It is a large house near the centre of the town. The location of the house enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres, the beach and parks.

Summary

This visit was an interim inspection and was unannounced. On the day of the inspection the home was not providing accommodation for any children and young people. Three young people had recently moved on and another young person was due to move in later that day. Our inspection methodology relies on evidence found at the time of inspection and this essentially includes users' views about the service. As this evidence is not available when there are no children and young people present we have completed a proportionate inspection; the purpose of which is to decide that should an admission be made the service would be able to work to a satisfactory standard.

The inspection, therefore, has focused only on the arrangements for young people's health, safeguarding, the living conditions and the management of the home. Also, it looked at the progress the home has made with the requirements and recommendations made at the last inspection. These related to: young people's diets; the standard of the accommodation; the recording of information about young people's needs, experiences and progress; and staff training opportunities.

The home is able to look after vulnerable young people and to promote and safeguard their welfare to at least a satisfactory standard. Young people are looked after by a group of competent people with the skills and experiences suitable to be caring for vulnerable young people.

Unfortunately, some of the home's good practice is not fully evidenced in the records. Young people's individual files do not always contain all the necessary information or provide a comprehensive picture of all their experiences, development and the range of support and advice they receive.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The progress the home has made since the last inspection was considered using the records available on the day, discussions with staff and one of the directors of the organisation, and observations of the environment. Because of the limited information available it was not possible to fully assess the home's progress in relation to keeping accurate records of young people's medication, and the previous recommendation remains in place.

The home has taken suitable steps to improve the majority of the issues raised previously and most have been addressed. Young people's diets have improved and they have enjoyed much

more balanced and healthy meals. Young people's health, behaviour and placement plans are regularly monitored and kept up to date to ensure they continue to meet young people's needs. Staff ensure that young people have the opportunity to record their views about any punishments they received and sign for their personal and clothing allowances.

The accommodation has been improved to ensure young people live in a comfortable environment. Young people now have suitable blinds and curtains in their bedroom windows, wardrobes to store their clothes, new bath towels, and somewhere to put their toothbrushes and toiletries in the bathrooms. In addition the gas boiler has been serviced to ensure it is working properly.

Staff now have regular training opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in caring for young people.

However, some of the records, such as health plans, still do not provide a full and comprehensive picture of young people's experiences and show how their needs are been addressed. In addition, young people's files do not contain important information about their education.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have healthy and varied meals that meet their dietary needs. Their food preferences are taken into account, but staff actively encourage young people to make healthy choices. For example, they encourage young people to try new food, such as broccoli, with pleasing results. This shows that staff fully understand the importance of good nutrition and what makes up a balanced diet. They give young people excellent advice and guidance about what is a balanced diet and its importance for a healthy body and to prevent health problems in the future. Young people have easy access to information about nutrition, diet and healthy recipes suitable to the age and level of understanding.

Young people's health and well-being are actively promoted. They have easy access to community health services and are registered with a local doctor, dentist and optician. They have individual health plans that show their general and specific health needs, but the plans do not always have enough detail to show how young people's health needs are being met. Nevertheless, staff are very knowledgeable about young people's individual health needs and the assistance they require. They monitor young people to make sure they are healthy, by encouraging them to attend routine health checks, such as going to the dentist, and by ensuring they get suitable medical advice and treatment when they are unwell.

Staff always encourage young people to take an active interest in looking after their own health and leading healthy lives. They encourage young people to take responsibility for their own health needs, such as arranging their own appointments, appropriate to their age and understanding. In this way the home places a strong emphasis on promoting healthy lifestyles. Young people have opportunities to discuss health and social issues openly and honestly with staff. They access information about a wide range of topics, including sexual health, smoking, alcohol, drugs, diet and emotional well-being.

Young people's health needs are met and protected by the clear and suitable medication policies. Medication is safely and securely stored. Staff are very knowledgeable about the medication

procedures, including the special arrangements for controlled drugs. However, the home's records of any medication taken by young people are not always accurately kept.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The home's policies and practices respect young people's rights to privacy, confidentiality and freedom consistent with good parenting and the need to protect them. Young people have single bedrooms and the bathroom arrangements promote privacy and dignity. The accommodation provides space where young people can relax easily and spend time to be alone when they wish. Information about young people is managed confidentially and held securely in the office. Also, young people have easy access to information about the complaints procedure to enable them to know what to do when they have concerns or if they are unhappy.

The home's safeguarding and bullying policies promote young people's welfare and protect them from harm. The procedures are thorough and stress staff's roles and responsibilities in promoting and safeguarding young people's welfare. The procedures also outline staff's duty to report any serious events, suspicions and concerns relating to young people's safety to parents, social workers, the police and Ofsted. In addition the policy on young people missing from the home clearly outlines what staff need to do to ensure that young people are found and return safely. This involves, for example, providing young people with excellent advice about personal safety in the community.

Staff are suitably trained in keeping young people safe and helping young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. They ensure that young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and the possible consequences of any poor behaviour. Staff view young people in a positive light and encourage acceptable behaviour by talking to them, trying to understand their behaviour and building positive relationships with them.

Young people live in a safe environment. They are protected by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks, including fire drills, to ensure the premises are safe and secure. The home's thorough quality assurance systems ensure that the checks are carried out consistently and any problems are immediately addressed.

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 satisfactory.

The accommodation is ready for young people to move in immediately. The house provides comfortable and homely accommodation that meets the needs of young people. It is clean, well maintained and decorated and furnished to a high standard. Young people's bedrooms have suitable beds, bedding, furniture and space for privacy and storing their belongings. The bathrooms are suitably maintained and provide young people with privacy when washing.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home is suitably managed to ensure that it is run effectively in the best interests of young people. Young people know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be looked after. The children's guide provides important information about the home in a way that is easily understood by young people. Also, the home has a clear written statement for parents and social workers of how the home operates and plans to meet young people's needs.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who have a wide range of suitable skills and experience. The skills within the team match the needs of young people living in the home well. The numbers of staff on duty meets the needs of young people in the best possible way. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

Staff are well-supported by the manager and have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They receive regular supervision and team meetings to allow them to discuss and review individual young people, the running of the home, staff development and training and to look at ways to improve the service they offer. Staff have good access to suitable training. The training programme comprehensively covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs.

The home has good systems to review the quality of care provided. The provider and manager consistently monitor the running of the home every month. As a result they identify areas for improvement and steps are taken to address the issues.

Young people's records are generally well-organised and contain relevant information about them to enable staff to look after them well and meet their needs. However, young people's files do not always contain all the relevant information about them, such as their personal education plans.

Although the files provide a clear insight to young people's individual needs and how they are being looked after, the records are not always thoroughly written. For example, health plans do not provide a comprehensive picture of young people's experiences, development and the support they are receiving. This means that some of the progress young people are making and the good work of staff is not adequately evidenced in the 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 Children's 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):

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- ensure that each young person has a comprehensive health plan that clearly identifies their health needs and shows how their needs are being met (NMS 12.2)
 - ensure that a written record is kept of all medication given to young people, and a record must be kept of when and why prescribed medicines are not administered or refused, when medication ceases and how and when medicines are disposed of (NMS 13.2)
 - ensure that each young person's file contains a copy of their Personal Educational Plan (PEP) setting out a record of their education achievements, needs and aspirations. (NMS 14.2)