

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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Date of last inspection	22 December 2008
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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 provides care for up to four young people on a medium to long-term basis. The property is a large, detached Victorian family house set in its own grounds in a quiet residential area within walking distance of a local shopping centre. The aim of the home is to offer individualised support designed to achieve stability and to prepare for independence where identified. Education can be provided by a range of local schools or the Access School run by Family Care Associates. Therapeutic provision is available via a Family Care Associates Creative Therapist who is able to offer various interventions to young people as identified within their placement plans.

Summary

This was a full unannounced inspection that concentrated on key National Minimum Standards. Three young people were living at the home, all of whom were present during part of the visit and one young person participated in some of the inspection process. The inspection focused on areas related to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing and how staffing and management arrangements supported the operation of the home.

The overall judgement for this service is good. Young people are receiving individualised support that is consistent with their needs. The Registered Manager provides practical leadership to the staff team which ensures the aims and objectives of the home are achieved. Young people's safety and wellbeing is effectively and consistently promoted. Staff are clear about their roles and responsibilities and work consistently with young people in their care.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered person was required to ensure that the home maintained a complete record of sanctions used. This requirement has been completed.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are receiving the right help and support to improve their fitness and general wellbeing. Staff are aware of each young person's health needs, the home's records evidence that routine appointments and visits to doctors, dentists and opticians are being made. In addition, young people are receiving well planned and coordinated support from specialist health services to ensure their emotional wellbeing and mental health needs are being met. Staff are first aid trained and the necessary consents are in place to deal with any medical emergencies. The home is using a number of over the counter remedies purchased from the chemist but these are not endorsed for use by any medical practitioner.

Staff approach important areas of health education with awareness and sensitivity. They work in partnership with young people to affect changes in behaviour and attitudes that have the potential to be long lasting and beneficial. The Registered Manager and staff team are responsive and supportive to young people's own suggestions and ideas about how to improve their health

and fitness. Young people are encouraged to make healthy choices regarding food, diet and exercise. They have a say in when and what they eat and the home's mealtime arrangements are relaxed and flexible.

Currently, the home is administering a range of medicines to young people and a recent focus on this area of practice has improved administration and recording standards. Generally, each young person is receiving the medication they need to maintain their good health. Staff are given practical guidance and support which is consistent with the home's policies but this is not currently underpinned by any formal or recent medication training.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are clearly benefiting from a service that has a good focus on safeguarding and protection matters. Managers provide effective leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safeguarding awareness and practices are important. The home has a comprehensive range of operational policies and procedures that are used effectively to ensure each young person is safeguarded. Staff frequently and consistently engage with young people about areas of concern or risk. Young people feel that the home is a safe place to be and that the staff team work in a way that helps this to happen.

The home provides young people with good levels of physical safety and security. For example, frequent health and safety checks are completed, fire drills and evacuations are practiced regularly and fire equipment is serviced at appropriate intervals. Planned fire safety training is due to be delivered as part of the home's programme of core training. Staff understand the need to respect each young person's privacy and confidentiality and they generally work with due consideration and care for individual needs and rights to privacy. Some minor shortfalls in this area are apparent, some of the home's records identify young people by name and some guidance to staff about specific routines for young people are displayed where they can be seen by anyone in the office.

Young people are protected from bullying behaviour because staff are aware of what they must do to prevent these circumstances from occurring. Staff and young people know that unwanted behaviour of any kind is not tolerated and will be challenged. Young people state that the staff are fair. They communicate expectations about behaviour and conduct clearly and in a way that constructively supports an individual's social development and relationships. Staff focus on positive aspects of behaviour and young people clearly understand how to gain rewards and privileges for behaving well. Where sanctions are given for poor behaviour records are made of these circumstances. The Registered Manager provides robust supervision of behaviour management practices. Records evidenced that where the manager assesses a sanction to be unreasonable or unfair it is overturned or reviewed.

There are good systems in place to deal with complaints and concerns. Young people know how to complain and feel that they are listened to and taken seriously. There are clear systems for reporting any event where a young person is absent from the home without permission. Staff regularly talk to young people about the dangers and risks of unplanned time away from the home. Reporting arrangements and assessments are based on individual needs and circumstances. This helps the staff team balance their responsibilities to keep young people safe against age appropriate levels of independence and supervision.

Staff personnel files were not accessed at this inspection due to them being held at a central location at the organisations head office. The Registered Manager confirmed that no new member of staff starts work in the home until all the necessary vetting checks have been completed. All visitors to the home are monitored because they are required to provide evidence of their identity and to sign a visitor's book.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are receiving a considerable amount of individual support from staff and other professionals who visit the home. The Registered Manager and key workers regularly review information about individual needs so that all staff are kept informed about important aspects that are relevant to each young person. This approach is particularly effective because of the very different needs young people have in relation to school and post educational arrangements. Young people's current needs are very different and the manager and staff team are working in a way that is individualised and supportive. The value of learning, training and the world of work is promoted well which means young people receive positive messages about the range of opportunities open to them and their possible future circumstances.

Staff consistently make themselves accessible and available to young people which means that they are responsive and attentive to individual needs. Key working arrangements are strong and the home's records evidence lots of one-to-one discussions between staff and young people about important areas of need. The Registered Manager regularly assesses how well the home is supporting each young person in meeting the requirements outlined in care plans. Every effort is made to ensure risks are minimised through comprehensive assessments that inform staff about how to keep young people safe.

Staff in the home have a very good approach to promoting awareness and knowledge about issues that relate to discrimination and fairness. Young people are actively engaged in conversations about individual differences and attitudes. Staff aim to raise awareness and understanding about issues that relate to diversity and equality and to equip young people with a broader and more informed view of the world.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have written placement plans which detail their care and support needs. The plans are regularly reviewed and young people are encouraged to contribute to decisions about their care. Staff produce regular written reports outlining each young person's development and progress. This results in key professionals being regularly informed about how well young people's needs are being met. Young people are able to maintain important relationships through appropriately agreed contact arrangements. Records demonstrate that contact for young people is clearly defined and any restrictions are discussed and recorded. A strength of the home is the way in which staff work in partnership with families to ensure young people's experience of contact is positive and meaningful.

Young people benefit from daily consultation with staff about their individual care needs and daily routines. They freely express their views about the day-to-day running of the home because staff encourage dialogue to promote choice and involvement in many areas of the home's operation. In addition, staff use a number of more formal ways to consult with young

people which include frequent house meetings and key worker sessions. The home's established culture of consultation also extends to newly arriving young people where their views and opinions are used to shape how staff support them to settle in. This results in young people feeling that they have a say about their daily lives and future plans.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is domestic in size and style with adequate facilities and amenities. It is close to a local shopping centre and public transport is nearby. Young people are encouraged to personalise their own rooms with pictures, posters and photographs. Young people feel comfortable in their surroundings and are regularly involved in household chores and domestic routines. They are encouraged to look after their own belongings and to keep their rooms clean and tidy. Most of the home is in a reasonable state of repair but some areas are in need of general refurbishment.

Young people are actively supported to develop their life skills in preparation for leaving care and independence. Staff encourage involvement in the home's domestic routines and regularly engage young people in discussions about achieving independence that is consistent with their needs.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people are being supported by management and staffing arrangements that are in line with the home's stated aims and purpose. Young people are provided with a written guide in an appropriate format to inform them about the home. The Registered Manager provides practical leadership, guidance and support to the staff team in support of their work with young people. Staffing arrangements are flexible and well planned which helps to meet the changing risks and needs of each young person.

The promotion of equality and diversity within the service is good. Young people are benefiting from living in a home where the manager and staff team are committed to meeting the diverse needs of each young person. Staff are well informed about young people's needs in relation to their identity and backgrounds and are fully aware of how to help and support them in a fair and non-judgemental way.

The manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. Young people are receiving good support because the staff team also receive good support and guidance. Access to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People is being provided to staff. The proportion of staff within the team who are qualified to this level is low but the organisation has arrangements in place to increase the numbers of qualified staff.

The Registered Manager has a regular cycle of quality assurance activities that produces a range of information about the home's operation. This includes regular external monitoring visits as well as internal audits of specific areas of service delivery. Managers are well informed about the overall effectiveness of the service as well as the areas that the home needs to develop or strengthen. Young people's case files are kept securely and contain an appropriate range of

information about their history and progress which matches the requirements set out in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

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):

- ensure the registered manager has secured and follows qualified medical or nursing advice in a written protocol on the provision of non-prescription medicine to young people (National Minimum Standards 13)
- provide appropriate training to staff for the storing, disposing and administration of medication (National Minimum Standards 13)
- ensure young people's privacy and confidentiality is maintained in all areas of the home's operation (National Minimum Standards 9)