

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC064666
Inspection date	24 September 2009
Inspector	Sue Winson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	23 March 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 children's home is a detached house in a residential area which is close to public transport links and community facilities. There are three bedrooms upstairs and one of these is used as a staff sleep-in room. Downstairs there is a lounge, kitchen, office/sleep-in room and a conservatory. It provides care and accommodation for up to two young people who are placed by their local authorities.

Summary

This is a good home; discreet areas for improvement are identified in this report.

Comprehensive placement plans outline young people's assessed needs and how they will be met, including access to specific professionals and agencies. Gaps in the information from placing local authorities affect the home's ability to meet needs in a holistic manner. Despite the encouragement and support of staff young people do not always engage with services.

Health promotion is evident and young people have choice in what they cook and eat. Staff are trained and ensure medication is safely stored and administered. Young people are informed about the complaints process and are protected by practices in respect of bullying, missing from home and risk management. Positive behaviour management includes rewards and incentives. Education is promoted and staff work with young people to find placements which are appropriate and which meet their needs.

Young people say they are well supported and staff know the plans for the young people. It is evident that more individual work is carried out than is recorded. The views of young people are routinely sought and they are encouraged to voice their views and opinions. Many of the records in the home contain space for their comments. Contact is promoted and staff work with parents to meet young people's needs.

The home has recently stabilised the staffing group to increase consistency for the young people. A new manager is in place who has applied to register with Ofsted.

The overall quality rating is good.

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 good.

Young people are encouraged to eat healthy meals and individual diets are monitored. They have the opportunity to shop for and prepare meals. Staff are trained in food hygiene. Staff work on health promotion as part of daily life and encourage young people to exercise.

Placement plans include an assessment of young people's health needs and how they will be met. The lack of full information from placing authorities compromises this planning. Where they are assessed as in need of specific health services these are provided, however, some of

the young people choose not to attend. The home also has links with the local Looked After Children nurse who visits the home and who will carry out health assessments. Young people are registered with doctors, dentist and opticians locally but do not always attend appointments. Staff are aware of a range of health promotion professionals and agencies in the area and are persistent in encouraging young people to engage with them with varying degrees of success. It is evident that the manager and staff are meeting the standards and are committed to improving outcomes for the young people.

The procedures and practices for the administration of medication serves to safeguard the young people. Medicines are safely stored and risk assessments are in place where young people keep their own medication. Staff have had training and full records are maintained. Permission is sought from a person with parental responsibility for the administration of non-prescription medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected. Satisfactory arrangements are in place for young people to see visitors or make telephone calls in private and appropriate procedures for searching rooms are followed in practice. Confidential information is safely stored in the offices.

Young people have written information about their rights to complain and are reminded in group meetings. They know of a range of people they can complain to outside of the home. Young people are protected from bullying and staff address inappropriate comments. The home has links with the Local Safeguarding Board and meetings are attended as necessary to monitor young people's safety. Staff talk with them about personal safety and invite local agencies and professionals into the home to discuss issues with the young people. All relevant people are informed of significant events. Staff are trained in child protection and anti-bullying strategies. Young people are protected from bullying and staff ask if they are being bullied on a regular basis.

Young people are largely protected by the home's policies and practices for those who are missing from home. The home cannot demonstrate that young people are routinely seen by their social workers or someone independent of the home on their return. Staff keep in touch by mobile phone when young people are missing and are concerned for their safety. They have been successful in reducing the number of incidents. Risk assessments are in place which include warning signs and triggers for young people going missing.

Staff are trained in positive behaviour management. Incentives and reward systems are effective and there is little use of sanctions, which are reasonable. There has been only one incident of physical intervention. The manager monitors behaviour management measures. The staff group are actively working to maintain consistent boundaries and the young people know the rules and what is expected of them.

A range of risk assessments are compiled for both generic and individual risks. These are thorough and include risk management strategies. They are working documents which are updated regularly and provide effective guidance for staff. Electrical and gas checks are carried out within the required timescales. Young people have the opportunity to practice leaving the house during fire drills and equipment is regularly checked.

The company has a recruitment procedure which includes an interview, CRB and take up of references. References taken up on staff do not always contain enough information to demonstrate that they are safe to work with children. All new staff have an induction period. A visitors book is in use and visitors are informed of the fire evacuation procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive support in line with their placement plans. It is evident, however, that more individual work is carried out than is recorded. Young people said they were well supported and given help and assistance. Staff encourage them to engage with outside agencies and professionals with varying degrees of success.

The education of young people is actively promoted and staff work with them to find appropriate placements. They are aware of resources in the area and encourage young people to attend school or college. Education plans are compiled which are regularly updated, however, the home does not have full information from placing social workers to inform these plans.

Young people are supported and encouraged to join in community activities and make friendships. They choose and plan their own activities and outings.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Comprehensive placement plans are compiled which are reviewed and updated on a monthly basis. Staff ensure that young people are provided with outside services to meet their assessed needs and encourage young people to take up the opportunities, with some success. There is clear evidence to demonstrate that the manager and staff are working with the young people to meet their needs. Lack of written information from placing authorities compromises care planning. Looked After Children reviews have either not taken place or there are no records of the outcomes in the home.

Young people are encouraged and supported to maintain contact with their families. Staff work to establish and maintain positive relationships with their families, and work in partnership to the benefit of the young people. Parents are kept informed of events and are welcomed to the house.

The views and opinions of young people are sought on a regular basis and as part of everyday life. The majority of records have space for their signatures and comments and they are encouraged to put in their views. Young people's meetings take place and they have choices in a range of areas including food, décor of the home and activities. They said they are asked their views and listened to.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps prepare them for adulthood. Staff work with them to build on and enhance their life skills as part of everyday life and encourage them to learn new skills. Formal independence plans and pathway plans are not in place. The staff balance the young people's need independence with safety issues, in an appropriate manner.

The home is well furnished and decorated in a homely manner. It is suitable for purpose and for the number of young people who live there. Young people have chosen the décor for their bedrooms and communal areas. A system is in place to ensure repairs and refurbishments are carried out in a timely manner.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff receive training and promote mutual respect in the home and challenge inappropriate comments. Young people have a voice and are listened to. Consideration of equality and diversity runs through many of the policies and practices. The staff group reflect the diverse local community.

The home has a statement of purpose which gives clear information on how it operates. A copy is available for the young people in addition to their own guide. Both are updated as necessary.

Following changes in staffing the home now has only one vacancy and has improved consistency of care for the young people. The home has a staffing complement of a manager and deputy, both of whom work in two other homes in addition to this one, two team leaders and three residential care workers. All are full time and permanent staff and over 80% of them have gained NVQ level 3 in the care of children and young people. In order to cover shifts a number of bank staff (employed by the company) also work in the home. No agency staff have been used in the last month. The company does not have a system in place to ensure that bank staff are supervised after every eight shifts. Permanent staff have regular supervision and appraisals. Staff meetings and shift handovers take place. Staff say that they are now working together as a team and that this is having a beneficial effect on the young people.

There is a well established training programme for staff which includes induction training. Records of training attended are maintained for permanent staff which demonstrates a range of training has been undertaken including equality and diversity, behaviour management, preparation for independence and anti-bullying strategies. Records of training are maintained for permanent staff but the home does not hold information on bank staff.

Systems are in place for the auditing of files and monitoring of the operation of the home. Visits under Regulation 33 take place monthly and senior staff carry out audits every six months. Weekly management monitoring is carried out. Despite this, some issues have not been picked up through the monitoring systems, for example, the lack of information from placing authorities. The manager has made an application to be registered by Ofsted.

Young people's files are well organised and well ordered. Staff can find information easily. Some records are not fully completed.

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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2	ensure that full written information is gained from placing authorities to inform care planning (Regulation 11)	24 September 2009
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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 that young people are seen by their social workers or someone independent of the home on their return to the home to consider the reasons for their absence. Where this is not possible ensure that the reasons are recorded and agreed with the placing authority (NMS 19)
- ensure that there is careful selection and vetting of staff (NMS 27)
- demonstrate that young people receive individual support (NMS 7)
- ensure that all records on young people's files contain full information (NMS 35)
- ensure that all staff receive appropriate supervision and appraisal (NMS 28).