

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24 September 2009
Inspector	Janet Manders
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	18 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 home is part of the provision operated by the local authority. The home provides care for up to two young people aged between 12 and 18 years old who have significant, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is a semi-detached property, which is indistinguishable from its neighbours. The young people are able to access local leisure activities in the immediate neighbourhood and staff provide transport to take the young people to those facilities that are at a distance. Young people have their own separate bedrooms and have a good sized enclosed garden, to enjoy a range of activities in. To the front of the home is a parking area for the staff members and visitors.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection, which looked at key standards of the children's homes national minimum standards (NMS). The inspection focused on areas related to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection also concentrated on how the home consults with young people, plans for their care and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the service.

Overall, the home provides a good standard of care for young people. The physical and emotional health needs of the young people are effectively met and young people's education is valued. Staff work hard to keep young people safe, with young people's needs being central to work undertaken by staff.

Staff are supported well by the manager, who has a strong commitment and focus on improvement, although team meetings and staff supervision do not take place as frequently as required, to fully enable staff to reflect on the care they provide to young people.

As a result of this visit there are no actions or recommendations set.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home continues to demonstrate a strong commitment to ensuring the service meets the national minimum standards. The last inspection required the manager to take action in respect of undertaking regular fire drills and staff supervision. Improvements have been made in both these areas with records demonstrating that these actions have been met.

Four recommendations were made at the last inspection relating to recording medication, young people signing records and the completion of impact assessments. These recommendations have now been satisfactorily addressed, with good records demonstrating the importance the home places on these areas. In addition the home now has over 80% of staff who have completed their National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good support to live a healthy lifestyle; their health needs are effectively met.

Young people are involved with planning the daily menus and use this as a positive learning experience to learn about different foods. They help shop for the ingredients and sometimes are involved in preparing meals. Staff encourage young people to eat a healthy diet, with fresh fruits always being available; sugary snacks are discouraged. Young people experience mealtimes as sociable events because staff and young people eat together.

Good arrangements are in place to support young people's individual health requirements. Young people's health is monitored and actions are taken promptly when health concerns are identified. Health plans set out young people's needs and clarify how needs will be met by the service. Young people have access to health professionals including doctors, dentists and opticians. Young people are referred to other specialist agencies where this is required. Young people are discouraged from smoking, alcohol abuse and illicit drug misuse.

Medication is handled well. The files for the young people contain signed medical consent forms, a record of all prescribed and non-prescribed medication and whether it has been taken. The home has procedures in place to ensure that medicines are appropriately handled and stored to safeguard young people's welfare. Young people's medication is safely stored in a wall-mounted lockable cabinet in a secured room which is also locked when not occupied.

Staff receive training in the administration of medication and first aid. This ensures that young people's health needs are appropriately promoted and addressed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are kept safe by a committed staff team who are supported in their work by clear policies and procedures. Young people's privacy is respected, as the home has clear guidelines on privacy and confidentiality, which are known and followed by staff. Staff do not enter young people's rooms without permission, except when young people are considered at risk.

Information held in respect of young people is stored in lockable facilities, which are only accessible to staff. There is guidance regarding the circumstances under which room searches can be carried out and a log of room searches is maintained. Young people have access to a telephone, which allows private conversation, when this is an agreed part of their placement plan.

Young people are well informed about how they can make a complaint or raise a concern. The home has a suitable system in place to investigate and resolve complaints promptly and without delay. Young people are able to access an advocacy services as an independent source of support if they require. Detailed information is included in the Children's Guide about how to make a complaint and avenues of support.

Staff are knowledgeable in relation to current child protection issues and Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures are followed. Safeguarding training is provided to staff as part of their induction programme and is regularly updated. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to report any child protection concerns.

Young people live in a caring, friendly and safe environment. Staff work actively in the home to ensure that bullying does not happen. They monitor young people's interactions to minimise the opportunity for bullying to take place. Young people are well educated about the detrimental effects bullying behaviours have and are clear about the home's policy on bullying. Unauthorised absences are well recorded with staff having clear protocols about informing the appropriate authorities. The procedure and guidance follow a regional joint protocol, which has been developed to ensure young people's safety is promoted. The home responds appropriately to instances of young people going absent without authority and work closely with other agencies to minimise any risk to young people. Patterns of absence are monitored and action plans are based on this evidence and risk assessments are updated accordingly.

Young people are clearly informed of the home's expectations of them and any action that will be taken if behaviour is unacceptable. Discussion of the house rules take place at the time of a young person's admission and are contained in the Children's Guide. Direct one-to-one time is spent with young people to discuss behaviours. Staff training is provided in relation to behaviour management, including physical intervention. Behaviour management is discussed during shift handovers and within staff meetings. This promotes young people's welfare as they are encouraged to behave appropriately and they receive consistent messages from staff as to how to behave. Measures of control are not excessive and good systems are in place to support the well-being and safety of young people.

Young people are cared for in a safe living environment. A current fire safety risk assessment informs practice in the home. Fire safety equipment is tested regularly and staff and young people are undertaking fire evacuation drills. The Manager ensures that utilities, domestic equipment and vehicles are checked to ensure they are safe to use and this provides physical safety and security for the young people who live in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from receiving support from staff that are focused on their success, needs and achievements. Staff encourage young people to achieve their potential and to develop their self-esteem.

Young people are given individualised support; young people identified as having particular needs receive help, guidance and support when needed or requested. All staff are aware of each young person's placement plan and offer appropriate support when necessary. Staff respect and value diversity and young people receive appropriate external support as the home has a proactive approach to working with other professionals. Records take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. Staff actively promote the social inclusion of young people in the home's routines and activities. Staff also support young people to access and attend various community-based activities and venues.

The home actively encourages young people's education and staff work hard to support young people to achieve full-time attendance in mainstream community schools. On occasions there are difficulties in identifying appropriate full-time education for some young people or in arranging appropriate transport. In such circumstances the manager and staff strongly advocate for the young people with the authority to ensure that young people are able to attend a

suitable school. Unfortunately they are not always successful. In these circumstances staff encourage and support young people to be involved in educational activities within the home and the local community. Young people therefore spend their time engaged in meaningful activity.

Staff are clear regarding their responsibilities in encouraging young people's educational achievement and are supported in this by clear policies and procedures.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's care is planned by the home so that staff are clear what support young people require for their needs to be met. Young people are encouraged and supported to be involved in this planning process.

Care planning is effective because young people are provided with an in-house placement plan that identifies the purpose of the placement and how the staff will meet the young person's needs. These plans are working documents and are updated on a regular basis. Young people are encouraged to contribute to the contents and aims of their plan. This enables young people to influence plans for their future.

The staff understand the value and importance for young people of communication and contact with their family. Young people are practically supported to maintain contact with their families in line with arrangements detailed within their care plans. Young people can have their families and friends to visit them at the home.

Young people are well supported by staff at the time of their admission to the home, with young people receiving clear guidance regarding the routines of the home, the home's expectation of them and what they can expect from staff. A risk assessment is completed before any young person is admitted to the home. This assessment considers the impact of the placement on the young person and any other young person resident at the home.

Staff demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of young people because they involve young people in all aspects of their care. For example, young people are supported to attend review meetings with staff to discuss their needs. Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. All young people are assisted to communicate their views in discussion with staff and during young people's meetings.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are appropriately supported to prepare for leaving the home whether this is to return home, to alternative carers or to move into independent living.

The home has in place a clear policy and procedure to help young people prepare and plan for independence. This includes developing and extending young people's practical skills related to budgeting, choosing appropriate provisions, domestic chores and health care. All of these skills are essential in making the successful transition into adulthood. Staff provide good advice, guidance and support to achieve these skills.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation which is decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard providing adequate facilities for their use. The design, layout and use of the accommodation allow young people to receive individual care and privacy. Each young person has their own bedroom which they are encouraged to personalise.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This home is well managed and organised. There are good management systems to ensure that the quality of care remains high and positive outcomes are being achieved for young people.

The home has in place a suitable Statement of Purpose that explains what services and support young people can expect. Young people also receive an appropriate version of the home's welcome guide, which explains the routines and day-to-day structure of the home. The home has a set of comprehensive policies and procedures to guide the staff in their work with the young people.

Staff are well supported by the manager and other senior staff in their work with young people, as they receive regular supervision and team meetings which discuss how the staff team meet the needs of young people to ensure consistency in the level of care given. Staffing is sufficient in number and competence to ensure that young people's needs are adequately addressed. There is a good mix of gender and background within the staff team to promote young people's identity and well-being. Staff training is effective and well coordinated to ensure that staff acquire necessary skills and maintain statutory competences.

There are adequate systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people living in the home. Regulation 33 visits are undertaken monthly by a senior Children's Directorate manager to monitor the overall care and welfare of young people. The manager also undertakes monthly quality monitoring of all the files and records as required. The individual records for the young people in the home are comprehensive, well organised and contain all the required information.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Policy, procedure and good practice helps young people to know that their individual needs on the basis of race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, age and religion are valued and the service is able to meet their diverse needs in everyday life in the home.

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

There are no recommendations.