

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC065679
Inspection date	18 September 2009
Inspector	Jacqui Gosling
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	16 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 a local authority children's home that provides emergency short term residential accommodation for a maximum of five young people of either gender, who are aged between 12 and 17 years on admission. The purpose of the home is to provide a safe and secure environment that promotes the welfare of the young people.

Placements are for a maximum of 12 weeks duration, other than in exceptional circumstances, during which plans to return home or another placement will be made and initiated. Five young people are currently living at the home.

The home is a purpose designed and newly built home located in a quiet residential area five minutes walk from the town centre and a mainline railway station. It is well served by public transport links and situated close to the motorway and other major road networks.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection focuses on all five outcome areas. The inspection also considers whether the actions and recommendations made during the previous inspection have been addressed. Two young people spoke about the support they receive from staff and their experience of living here.

The physical, emotional, health and welfare needs of the young people are well met overall. Staff are actively working to promote their wellbeing but some young people are refusing support from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Some young people do not have suitable educational placements and statutory reviews are not always held as required .

Young people make good relationships with staff, who work well with schools and other agencies. The commitment of all staff to meeting the needs of young people is evident. Not all staff receive supervision as required and staff meetings are currently not being held monthly. Currently, the records kept of complaints is inadequate. Staff shortages impact on shift patterns.

Overall, the home is providing a satisfactory standard of care for young people.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Three action and three recommendations were made following the last inspection that took place in February 2009.

As required the home now ensures before providing accommodation for a child or if that is not reasonably practicable as soon as possible, a written plan is prepared, kept under review and revised as necessary.

The home now promotes and makes proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated. Ensuring the needs of the child concerned and the likely effects of his/her admission upon the existing residents are not overridden when decisions on admissions to the home are made.

The action to promote and protect the health of the children accommodated in the home is restated as the systems for promoting the health needs of all young people are still not sufficiently robust.

There is now a written record that details the time, date and length of each supervision for each member of staff, including the registered person and the record is signed by the supervisor and supervisee at the end of the supervision.

One recommendation regarding statutory reviews and reviews of placement is restated because the system in place is not sufficiently robust.

The recommendation to ensure the recruitment process is followed, specifically Criminal Records Bureau checks of staff are available for external inspection remains as the recruitment files are maintained at another location and will considered at a later date.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary and health needs. They are encouraged to prepare snacks and their meals at lunchtime with staff support. The cook offers cooking workshops to encourage young people to participate in the preparation and serving of meals. Some young people say 'they enjoy cooking'. Staff complete training in food hygiene as required.

The health and care needs of young people are identified and updated regularly. A clear plan for each young person details how their specific and general health issues are to be addressed. All young people are registered with the required health professionals.

Staff, in partnership with the person with parental responsibility, actively seek out further services when required to meet the needs of the young people. For example, the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. However, when young people refuse to attend these appointments there is nothing on file to show what action is being taken to ensure their health needs are met. Other agencies visit the home on a regular basis to give advice and support on a range of health and social issues.

The Looked After Child nurse visits the home on a weekly basis, so young people can discuss any health concerns they have. This means that overall the young people receive care that actively promotes their wellbeing and health.

The files for the young people contain signed medical consent forms from the person with parental responsibility for vaccinations, preventative inoculations including the administration of household medication and first aid. The wellbeing of young people is further promoted by staff undertaking training in first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Information held on behalf of all young people is appropriately stored. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to promote privacy and confidentiality and their practice is consistent with Local Authority policies and procedures.

The welfare of young people is promoted by a clear complaints policy. However, the system in place to record any concerns made known by young people and show that the matter has been appropriately dealt with is inadequate.

The welfare of young people is protected because staff receive training in child protection. The procedures in the home fully comply with the local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Young people know that bullying is not tolerated and they are confident that staff will intervene to ensure they are protected from bullying by others should the need arise. Young people say 'they feel safe living here'. Their safety is further promoted when their whereabouts are unknown as staff follow the agreed reporting procedures for these circumstances. This results in practices that are consistent with wider police protocols for reporting young people who abscond.

Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour management policies are robust and strategies have as their prime objective the creation of a safe, supportive environment. Staff have completed the required training to ensure if physical intervention is necessary it is consistent with guidance.

There is positive and effective interaction between staff and the young people and lots of friendly banter. Staff appear very comfortable with their role and observation and records show they clearly understand the need for boundaries while maintaining a high quality relationship between themselves and young people.

Young people live in a home that provides for their physical safety and security. There are appropriate risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds. This includes serious incident planning; the behaviour of the young people and their activities, all of which are updated as required.

Robust procedures are in place to protect young people from fire. There are records to show that all the fire systems are regularly tested. Staff and young people undertake fire drills in excess of requirements. However, the required yearly night time drill has not been completed. Relevant certificates show that regular servicing and maintenance is completed on all gas and electrical equipment.

All visitors to the home are monitored by being asked to show proof of their identity and required to sign in the visitor's book. These procedures ensure all young people living here are protected from potential risks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The progress and development of young people is well documented in their files and show how young people are supported throughout their stay. For example, young people are provided with regular opportunities to spend individual time with their key worker. The home's records show that these sessions provide young people with the opportunity to talk about particular issues relevant to them as individuals and to receive support and guidance consistent with their needs. Staff know the young people well and are able to respond to them in a way that considers and respects them as individuals. The home has purchased a portable induction loop in the event young people or staff have an hearing impairment. External services are requested as

necessary to meet the needs of individual young people. For example, the Children's Advocacy and Rights Service.

The majority of young people currently living at the home are not attending any formal education facility, although some are over the statutory education age range. Staff have the support of an education coordinator who liaises with the local authority Education Department and Looked After Child in Education Service and other agencies to ensure young people receive an education in line with their age, educational needs, interests and potential. However, for some young people placement at this home has affected previous plans for their education and some young people do not have Personal Education Plans as required.

There are a range of informal educational programmes. For example, private tutors who offer the opportunity for the young people to participate in music and art sessions. The young people's artwork is displayed in one of the corridors and clearly shows they are engaging with this opportunity. However, Some young people are refusing to engage in either formal or informal education.

All young people are supported and encouraged to participate in hobbies and activities of their choice within and outside of the home. Staff ensure that is a correct balance between supervised and unsupervised time. This is risk assessed and takes into consideration the age, gender, abilities and interests of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people say they are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives. They are actively encouraged to communicate their views in regular discussions with their key carers, during group meetings and on an informal basis every day. In discussion, staff clearly demonstrate that they value the views and opinions of young people

Staff respect and value equality and diversity. It is clear throughout the young people's placement plans that their individual needs are identified. Staff have a proactive approach to working with external agencies, social workers and other professionals to address these needs.

Not all young people have had Statutory Reviews within required timescales when their care plans have changed significantly.

In accordance with their care plans all young people are encouraged to maintain contact with members of their families. Staff clearly understand how important communication and contact with their family is for the young people and support their contact arrangements.

Significant time is taken to build relationships between the staff and young people. Staff have clear expectations of appropriate behaviour and young people are observed to freely initiate interaction and seek help from the various staff members on duty. They clearly benefit from receiving support from staff that is focused on their needs and achievements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There are suitable arrangements in place for the young people to be able to choose and purchase their own clothing and for them to receive pocket money. Young people expressed their satisfaction with the current arrangements for purchasing clothes.

The home is located in a residential area and the young people have good access to transport, education facilities, health care provision and leisure activities. Individual communal rooms are domestic in style but the building is not. Rooms are decorated, furnished and maintained to a good standard. Young people say they are able to have some say in personalising their large single en-suite bedrooms.

The entrance to the building, the corridor on the ground floor, the stairs and upstairs corridor are not at all domestic in style. The manager and staff recognise the shortfalls of the building and examples of the young people's artwork and achievements, are on the corridor walls to encourage young people to have a sense of belonging. The home does provide ample space for the number, age and gender of the young people living here.

Both the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair with an ongoing maintenance programme.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a Statement of Purpose and Young People's guide, which outlines the principles, practice and the services that they can expect from the home.

There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home. The Registered Manager is appropriately qualified, skilled and experienced to provide leadership to the staff team and young people. He 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. The home has clear deputising arrangements in his absence.

Staff duty rotas and the manner in which staff are deployed confirm that the home keeps sufficient staff on the duty rota at all times, but to do this requires frequent use of pool and agency staff. Senior members of staff who are sufficiently experienced and competent usually lead the shifts. However, there are unfilled staff vacancies. This has led to staff raising formal concerns during supervision, that some shifts have been led by members of staff designated as support staff, with no other permanent staff on duty.

Staff supervision records show that some staff are not receiving supervision in accordance with National Minimum Standard timescales. Staff meetings have not occurred since July 2009. This does not provide young people with a staff group, who are themselves supported and sufficiently guided in promoting their welfare needs.

Effective information systems are in place to ensure the team's training and development needs are met. There are appropriate systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. Regulation 33 visits are undertaken monthly to monitor the overall care and welfare of the young people. The manager reports to the Corporate Parent Panel monthly on what action is being taken to rectify any issues identified by this visit. The manager also undertakes quality monitoring of all the files and records as required.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The individual files of the young people are comprehensive, their health, welfare and educational needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. They contain a range of information about young people's 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
12	promote and protect the health of the children accommodated in the home (Regulation (1)(2)(b).	17 December 2009
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)(7)	17 December 2009
30	ensure a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons are working at the home (Regulation 25)	17 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that staff and children are evacuated from the building at night at least once during a 12 month period (NMS 26.8)
- ensure each child's file contains a copy of their Personal Education Plan setting out a record of their educational achievements, needs and aspirations. (NMS 14.2)
- ensure each child is given full access to educational facilities, in line with their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (NMS 14.3)
- ensure for children of compulsory school age who are not in school (or a Pupil Referral Unit) the home has in place an educational programme during normal school hours (14.7)
- ensure requests are made for emergency or statutory reviews to take place when they are due, if the placing authority has not arranged the review (NMS 3.3)
- ensure the results of all statutory reviews are recorded on the child's file and individuals responsible for pursuing actions at the home arising from reviews are clearly identified (NMS 3.4)
- ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours one to one supervision each month (NMS 28.2)
- ensure staff meetings occur at least monthly (NMS 28.10).