

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	19 August 2010
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	15 February 2010
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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 an assessment service for one particular local authority and cares for children and young people between the ages of eight and 16 year old on admission who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. Following the assessment period, young people move to appropriate placements that include their family, a move to another placement or transition to independence.

The home is a three bedded unit in a large residential property. The ground floor comprises of a lounge, dining room, kitchen, staff office and toilet. The first floor has three bedrooms for children, a bathroom and a staff sleeping-in room. There is also a large rear garden. Currently three young people are living here, one of which contributed directly to the inspection.

The home is situated among similar properties and is within walking distance of local amenities. There are bus routes nearby to the city and surrounding areas.

Summary

The home continues to operate at a particularly high level and the overall quality rating remains outstanding. No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection. From this unannounced key inspection of all areas only one recommendation is made to ensure that a development plan is compiled. There is strong leadership and monitoring and a high level of staff competence. Staff training is a particular highlight and equality and diversity issues are given high priority.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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 outstanding.

Young people benefit from excellent health-related processes that help them to enjoy good health. These processes range from their active involvement in healthy eating, to close attention to individual health needs. Young people are provided with a culturally diverse range of meals and individual preferences are incorporated, for example, Caribbean food. Staff display a full understanding of these issues and routinely engage young people in conversation about health topics. This helps educate young people and also contributes to the assessments being undertaken by staff.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The welfare of young people is fully promoted. Young people are systematically and effectively protected from abuse by appropriate staff procedures and training. Staff have a thorough knowledge of safeguarding procedures. Attention is paid to internet security, for example, and staff also routinely engage young people in conversations about all types of safety. This

contributes to reducing the impact on young people when they are absent without authority and reducing bullying. Consequently, young people feel the home is a happy place to live.

Young people feel that staff respect their privacy very well. This is reflected in the sensitive way in which difficulties such as bedroom searches are conducted. A similarly high degree of attention is paid to anticipating and dealing with young people's concerns. Few formal complaints are received from young people and any from neighbours are dealt with appropriately. Young people consistently consider that they are cared for in a particularly fair and reasonable way. This is of particular credit to the team because it reflects the views of various young people who have lived in the home during the last few years. There are also systems in place to engage families in the service, for example, by consulting them and providing details of the complaints procedure. This helps young people feel more secure.

Young people receive particularly clear guidance from staff about socially acceptable behaviour. Staff are skilled in developing good working relationships with young people and this plays a substantial role in behaviour management. Inappropriate behaviour is addressed firmly and consistently, although the short time that young people are in the home prevents close attention to behaviour modification. A reward system is in place to encourage positive behaviour and young people say that staff are 'fair'. Specific risks to individual young people are very well monitored and closely managed.

Young people benefit from high levels of safety and all equipment is checked and serviced at appropriate intervals. Risk management plans are of a particularly high standard. Work is underway to refocus fire drills on staff training to further improve their ability to deal with emergencies; this is good practice. All young people are fully familiarised with the fire procedures. The safety of young people is also ensured through thorough recruitment procedures. All necessary checks are undertaken and additional work is undertaken if there are any reservations, for example by taking-up more references. This helps to ensure that young people are kept safe and receive a high standard of care.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from excellent support. Individual attention is nearly always available and is applied consistently between team members. All the team members are fully familiar with each young person's needs and take responsibility for addressing them. This is in addition to the more structured attention to placement plan targets provided by key worker teams. Each young person's behaviour is fully risk assessed and the level of risk amended as their assessment proceeds during their short stays in the home. It is to the credit of the organisation that systems are improved where appropriate. Steps are currently underway, for example, to refine the method of risk assessment to increase its accuracy and that of the assessments themselves. The team is well-positioned to address individual identity needs related to gender and race. Equality and diversity issues run throughout the paperwork and are part of children's assessments.

The formal education of young people is promoted strongly although the overall impact on non-attendance, for example, is affected by the short stays of most young people. Education also occurs informally through discussion of social and personal issues as well as regular equality and diversity events. The home also provides educative resources such as computers with

controlled internet access. Successes are celebrated all the time both verbally and through displays, including certificates.

There are excellent opportunities for young people to participate in leisure activities. Young people help to compile weekly activity plans, which include cultural events in the community. This ensures they are as constructively occupied as possible. Staff also allow young people to try new sports or other activities, such as street dancing. Outings are arranged frequently and there are periodic events organised by the company, too. This is particularly relevant at present because of the summer holidays. Each young person has a plan to go away that is focussed on their individual wishes.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Staff undertake in-depth assessments of young people and also compile and maintain active placement plans that address their individual needs. This is achieved through a complex system of documents, which are extremely detailed and thorough. These excellent records gradually develop into the final assessment of each young person's needs. The views of each young person are highlighted throughout. Along with a framework of internal and statutory reviews, this work forms the basis of the planning for their next placement. Young people are fully involved in the review process before, during and afterwards. This area of care shows the exceptional level of consultation between staff and young people that is at the centre of care-practices in the home.

As part of the intake and assessment contract with the local authority, young people often move in at short notice. Given this, the arrangements are well-planned, with pre-admission visits in some cases, and are undertaken particularly sensitively. Young people say they were pleasantly surprised and also relieved by how positive their admissions were; this is to the credit of the staff team. Young people are thoroughly prepared for their discharges too and receive farewell gifts. Strong consultation and contact with families helps to support young people in the home.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care that contributes substantially to their preparations for adulthood. Young people are expected and encouraged to be involved in household chores and activities. This includes tidying their bedrooms, understanding their own finances, and responsibilities in the kitchen. So, in this way, although there is limited time, young people are taught a variety of life-skills.

The home itself and its organisation provide an important and positive model for young people to learn from. Young people enjoy a homely property that is indistinguishable from its neighbours. It is well presented throughout and provides good facilities for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Staff training is in place to specifically address this area of care and processes are in place to ensure it is addressed systematically throughout the year and with every young person. For instance, this occurs through frequent

events in the home that discuss religious festivals, as well as attendance at events in the wider community. Staff engage young people in conversations about subjects such as homophobia and sexuality and provide positive images of their diverse community. Similarly close attention is paid to meeting young people's individual needs in order for them learn as much as possible during their stays. This shows clearly in excellent individual files to which young people have frequent access.

This emphasis on equal opportunities is reflected in an up-to-date and thorough Statement of Purpose. Young people receive and are talked through a comprehensive 'A-to-Z' guide that reflects the Statement of Purpose but in an accessible format. It provides information about how to complain, for example, as well as external sources of support. Staffing arrangements are also described and kept up-to-date.

Young people are looked after by staff who receive a high level of support. Staff meetings are held more often than required, which helps to ensure consistency of care practices as well as good support of staff. There is clear and regular personal supervision of each member of staff and they have ready access to good advice from the manager and responsible person. Staff are encouraged to extend their understanding of care issues, for example by reviewing the national minimum standards and attending training events. Training is excellent. There is prompt attention to new issues as well as a programme of events to address regular topics, induction training and national vocational qualifications. New staff receive comprehensive induction training before they begin work and this is an important contribution to their competence. Staff display an excellent level of competence. The daily operation of the service is conducted calmly and effectively and adapted as events arise. Good staffing levels are maintained during both the day and night.

The manager currently oversees two homes and also deputises, with colleagues, for the responsible person. This is a highly effective system of leadership and allows, for example, good attention to staff support and to monitoring. Monthly in-house monitoring is delegated to senior staff, which helps to ensure their development and understanding and also extends the range of people who check the service. The organisation also undertakes additional monitoring on a regular basis, which is more extensive than required by the national minimum standards. This is an important contribution to the high standards in the home. There is no development plan for the home but this has minimal impact on young people.

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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Recommendations

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

- ensure there is a written development plan for the future of the home. (NMS 33.5)