

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	25 May 2010
Inspector	Robert Curr
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	6 November 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

This children's home provides up to four long-term placements for young people aged from 12 years old up to 17 years old. The accommodation consists of four single bedrooms and spacious communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing.

The home is approximately three miles from the town centre and it is close to public transport. One of the main aims of the setting is to equip young people with the skills to make responsible choices and to cope well as citizens.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection. All of the key standards were checked and improvements made since the last inspection were noted.

This is a satisfactory service. Young people's education is encouraged. Leisure needs are met and a multi-disciplinary approach ensures young people's views are taken into account when planning their future.

A policy on equality and diversity is in place but staff do not fully demonstrate an appreciation that individual young people may have a range of possible needs arising from diversity. Young people's freedom of movement is restricted by the locking of internal doors during the night.

The service is monitored, thus enabling the registered provider to oversee the operation of the home.

The level of experienced and competent staff supporting the young people is inconsistent. Not all staff have had suitable training and the aim to have the appropriate number of staff hold a National Vocational Qualification must be maintained.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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 asked to take action in relation to aspects of staying safe and organisation. These included fire safety and staff training.

All staff undertake fire drill practices at the recommended frequency and although some progress has been made in relation to staff training, National Vocational Qualification ratios do not meet current standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have their health needs assessed on admission to the home. Staff are good at securing all the relevant information required to enable them to respond to any health needs that arise. Young people receive encouragement and support from staff to attend their routine medical appointments at suitable intervals. Prompt registration with local primary health care services helps to facilitate this and clearly written healthcare plans are completed to monitor young people's health and physical development.

Young people are offered food from different cultures and are involved in individualised menu-planning. There is plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables available and young people decide for themselves what and when they will eat. Staff recognise the impact of this on general health and well-being and work with young people to promote regular healthy eating.

Young people are taking various forms of medication so there are sound procedures in place for staff to follow to ensure that young people are safeguarded in this respect. The majority of staff have received first aid training and there is a suitable first aid box available.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people have their privacy and confidentiality respected. The identity of visitors is checked and files are stored securely in locked cabinets in the office. There is plenty of space in the home should young people want time away from other people and they have exclusive use of a bathroom and shower room.

The measures that are in place to ensure that young people are safeguarded are not wholly effective. Although staff spoken to are fully aware of the circumstances under which child protection procedures should be used, not all staff have undertaken training in safeguarding and child protection. On admission young people are advised of the complaints procedure and they have access to a number of individuals outside of the home to whom they can voice any concerns.

Bullying is not an issue at the home at this time, but young people are made aware of the zero tolerance approach to bullying within or outside of the home. Young people do run away from the home. When these episodes occur staff endeavour to keep in touch with young people to facilitate their safe return.

Young people benefit from individualised risk assessments that support behaviour management. Physical intervention is used to manage behaviour. Although the majority of staff are trained in approved techniques, some staff have not undertaken this training. Some records in relation to incidents and sanctions used are unclear. These do not always show that staff have responded to unacceptable behaviour in a constructive and acceptable manner. Some doors are routinely locked internally in an attempt to keep young people safe, which is an excessive and unreasonable control.

Fire drills are undertaken when young people are first admitted to the home and thereafter at appropriate intervals. There is an up to date fire risk assessment in place. Fire equipment, emergency lighting and fire doors are also checked, and other environmental tests and risk assessments are also carried out. Individual risk assessments on young people's known or likely behaviours are comprehensive with clear guidance for staff about how to minimise and manage such risks.

There are sound procedures in place to protect young people from those unsuitable to work with vulnerable groups. Personnel files contain all the information required by the regulations.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The staff maintain good links with outside agencies and professionals, such as specialist health care professionals and the looked after children educational support team, which assists in supporting young people and meeting their individual needs.

Because staff secure as much information as possible from placing authorities and previous placements, young people are offered good support from the first day of their admission to the home. In consultation with young people, staff make an effort to identify their individual needs and the best way to help them to settle in and make progress.

The staff team value education and achievement and the young people are accessing various forms of education. Young people have access to a computer to undertake schoolwork or pursue leisure interests but do not have internet access. This is not fully aiding young people's prospects in relation to education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Close attention is paid to ensuring that placement plans fully reflect young people's needs. Staff present young people with plenty of opportunity to be involved in this process and they have regular opportunities to discuss their needs with staff. Specific requirements in relation to diversity and equality are also incorporated into the overall plan of care.

A good review process is effective in highlighting young people's progress and in identifying any shortfalls or concerns. Contact with families is recognised as an important aspect of a young person's life and a means by which young people can have a positive sense of identity reinforced.

Staff are in frequent dialogue with young people about their care, needs and wishes. They are offered the opportunity to participate in review meetings and voice any concerns they may have to either external contacts or the visiting directors of the organisation.

Young people are provided with a range of information about how the home operates. Introductions to the home and the settling in period are managed well. There are accurate and clear recordings of where young people have been previously accommodated, along with good documentation in relation to the admissions and discharge process.

All the young people stated that they feel involved in the day to day running of the home. They also say that they are regularly consulted about matters affecting them. This practice illustrates that young people's views are valued.

Relationships between staff and young people are based on mutual respect. The support that staff offer one another is clearly evident. Staff lead by example in showing an interest in each other's welfare as well as the young people's.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

No young people are taking part in formal leaving care plans at this time. The opportunities provided for the young people to buy their own clothing and toiletries gives them experience in expressing their individual preferences and help them to develop skills, such as budgeting, that will be essential throughout their life. They are allowed to spend money freely unless they have been found spending it inappropriately.

The home provides comfortable and spacious accommodation for young people. There is ample room for privacy as well as for communal activities. The interior and exterior of the home are maintained to a satisfactory state of structural and decorative repair. However, the carpet on the first floor level is showing signs of wear and both the front and back door look unpleasant due to long term damage. The gardens areas are not well maintained. The manager has highlighted these areas for improvement.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home's Statement of Purpose is detailed and has been recently been reviewed. It describes what the service seeks to provide for young people. The young person's guide to the service is given to young people. Both documents are clear and easy to understand and provide information about how young people are cared for in the home.

Young people benefit from being cared for by an established staff team. Not all staff used are appropriately trained to meet young people's needs. This does not ensure a consistent approach. Most staff are given training in matters such as, safeguarding, managing challenging behaviour and medication procedures. Not all the staff that are used have compatible training.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people have access to a team that is balanced in terms of race, age, background and gender, and have access to services in a diverse local community.

A number of training events have been arranged. The manager maintains training records that are not up to date. Training records are hard to retrieve. It is not clear when staff have had training in the various subjects. Not all of the appropriate staff have achieved a qualification at National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) level 3 in caring for Children and Young People. This means that the qualification recommendation is not met.

There are always sufficient staff on duty to ensure that young people are cared for at all times. Staff confirm that they are supported by the management team and supervision sessions take place at the recommended intervals to provide support and guidance.

There are a number of quality assurance processes including monthly monitoring visits by the proprietors. The Registered Manager also produces a monthly report.

Young people's files contain the detailed information that is required. Files are stored securely and young people are encouraged to read their records. This ensures that young people have access to detailed information about their placement.

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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22	ensure that a clear written record is kept of and measure of control, restraint or discipline, in particular, the reason for restraints being used (Regulation 17(4))	31 May 2010
31	ensure all staff receive appropriate training, in particular, child protection and behaviour management (Regulation 27(4)(a))	31 August 2010
22	ensure that no measure of control is used which is excessive or unreasonable, in particular, the routine locking of internal doors (Regulation 17(1))	25 May 2010
24	ensure all parts of the home used by children are kept well maintained, in particular, the entrance doors and garden areas. (Regulation 31(2))	30 June 2010

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 provided with facilities that are conducive to study. This is with particular reference to providing young people with access to the internet (NMS 14.5)
- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete a National Vocational Qualification level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent (NMS 29.5)
- ensure that a written record of all training for all staff is maintained in the home. (NMS 31.4)