

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	22 January 2010
Inspector	Jacqui Gosling
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	19 November 2008
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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 one of a group of four homes that have been set up as part of a tendering contract with a local council.

The home is a three bedded unit in a large, converted, semi-detached residential property. The ground floor comprises of a lounge, dining room, kitchen, staff office and toilet. There is also a large rear garden. The first floor has three bedrooms for children, a bathroom and a staff sleeping-in room. There are currently three young people living at the home.

The home is situated within walking distance of local amenities. There are local bus routes to access the large city nearby and surrounding areas. The home is an intake and assessment unit that provides short-term accommodation for young people aged 12 to 16. Following the assessment period, the young people are referred to appropriate placements that may include foster care, long-term homes or specialist placements.

Summary

At this unannounced key inspection, all key standards in all outcome areas are assessed. A good practice recommendation from the previous inspection is also considered. All the young people gave their views of living at the home.

The home provides an excellent standard of care. Young people are fully involved in the assessment, care planning and decision making processes and feel confident about contributing their views to the running of the home. They enjoy positive relationships with staff which helps them to feel settled and to make good progress. Staff are consistent in their approach to young people and behaviour is managed at the lowest level.

Staff encourage young people to develop a healthy lifestyle and work hard to ensure that they are able to pursue their education and achieve to their individual potential. Staff also support young people to maintain positive relationships with their families and significant others. Young people are cared for safely by a competent team of staff, who work well together and who are supported by clear policies, supervision, relevant training and robust recruitment procedures.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

One recommendation was made during the last inspection that took place in November 2008. It has been addressed and the interior of the home has been repainted to ensure the property remains in a good state of decorative repair.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The promotion of young people's health is excellent. Clear health plans, based on detailed initial assessments, ensure that the health requirements of young people are known to staff and that they receive the support they need to promote their good health. Plans are developed and monitored regularly to make sure that information is up to date and accurate. Young people

are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician when they are admitted to the home and are supported at health appointments. This enables staff to make sure that young people have access to additional health services they may need. Staff actively encourage young people to live healthy lives.

Staff understand that good nutrition plays an important part in maintaining good health and encourage young people to eat a healthy balanced diet. Young people are involved in helping to choose menus which reflect their individual preferences, as well as their religious and cultural requirements. This helps them to develop their own understanding of how to make healthy meals. Staff keep good records of the menus that are served to young people, so that they can monitor their diet. Young people and staff eat together and meal times are pleasant social occasions.

All staff members complete a first aid course, this ensures staff are competent should the young people need assistance with a medical issue. The storage, handling and recording of medicines is well organised and safe in the home. No household medicines are kept in the home and staff confirm that individual young people are taken to their doctor should they need any medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The young people receive a high level of privacy in the home and report that staff always knock on their doors prior to entering.

The complaints procedure is easily accessible to young people and they know how to use it. There are good relationships between the young people and the staff, and an open culture encourages young people to raise any issues they have freely. The outcome of complaints is clearly recorded and shows that staff have taken the outcome of the complaint back to young people and encouraged a response.

The safety and welfare of the young people has a very high priority in the home and they feel safe while living there. Each of the young people has their needs and risks identified in documents providing detailed, clear information to staff about how risks can be minimised as far as possible. These risk assessment documents work very well in practice. Staff put great effort into guiding, supporting and helping young people to keep themselves safe when at the home and out in the community. The staff at all levels understand and are very clear about what they should do if there is a safeguarding issue, they are vigilant about liaising with other professionals and placing authorities.

There is a very clear procedure identified for staff to use should a young person become missing. Each of the young people's situations are seen as individual and there are close working relationships with the police. This in turn ensures that the young people are as safe as they can be. Apart from risk assessments pertaining to individuals, there are more general documents appropriate to other activities and for areas around the building.

The staff have built up very positive relationships with the young people. Their needs are well understood by the staff and they know what the triggers are for more challenging behaviour for individuals. Staff have completed training and are competent in diffusing situations to try to avoid the use of physical intervention. Staff also regularly draw on expertise from other professionals when needed, for example, counselling services. Behaviour management is

something that the staff team are consistently good at and this helps the young people to progress in their overall behaviour. All physical intervention is documented as required.

There are appropriate procedures in place to ensure that the building is safe for the young people, staff and visitors. Fire drills exceed required standards and tests are undertaken on all fire equipment in line with the requirements of the fire authority. Staff and young people know what to do should there be a fire. Inspection of the gas, electric and portable appliances are all up to date and this ensures the safety of the staff and young people. Visitors to the building are informed of the fire procedures upon arrival. This is good practice.

The recruitment policy and procedures used by the organisation and home ensures effective levels of safety for the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The staff are very familiar with the individual needs of the young people and there is a robust system for ensuring that they receive the relevant personal support. The good relationships between the young people and the staff ensure that young people feel able to talk to the staff about their problems. The staff are good at liaising with other agencies to ensure that a wide range of appropriate support can be delivered. They are also creative about how they offer support to the young people, and feel strongly that this is a very important part of their role. Key working sessions work very well and are based around the care planning and reviewing process. This ensures that each need is properly assessed and the required support planned and delivered as the young peoples needs require it.

Staff are very positive about the value of education and work hard to make sure that every young person has an educational placement that helps them achieve their educational potential. They advocate on behalf of young people if there are difficulties at school and provide practical and emotional support to help them to maintain their attendance. All achievements are recognised and celebrated, which encourages young people to persevere with their education.

Leisure is covered in individual care plans and it is evident that the leisure needs of the young people are well met. Staff have ensured that the young people have leisure opportunities, some of which the young people may not have had access to otherwise. Young people are encouraged in their personal interests and hobbies.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Care planning in the home is based around assessing the needs of the young people. The system is well understood by staff and ensures that there is streamlining from the point of admission into their everyday life. When the needs of the young people change, the systems in place for the exchange of new information are very good. The staff are extremely well informed, clearly know the young people very well and understand their needs and how they should be met. Staff clearly understand the principles of good care planning and ably demonstrate that all relevant information in the case files is current and accurate. However, the local authority are not always ensuring 72 hour meetings and statutory reviews are held within required timescales. This impacts on care planning for young people and the manager must ensure local authorities fulfil their responsibility to the young people.

Young people are able to retain contact with their family and friends and staff are fully conversant with any restriction on contact. All contacts are recorded in the case notes.

Staff demonstrate that they place great value on the views and opinions of the young people and spend a lot of quality time with them to ensure that their views can be established. There are regular young people's meetings and key working sessions which work very well to ensure that young people's wishes and views about their life and the running of the home can be established.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home provides opportunities for young people to learn the practical skills they will need to support themselves in later life. For example, they are encouraged to take part in routine tasks, such as cooking and cleaning.

There are appropriate arrangements in place to ensure young people receive their pocket money and are able to choose their own clothes when shopping. However, allowing young people to use future pocket money to pay for inappropriate use of taxi's, results in them having no pocket money for a number of weeks and does not encourage them to manage their finances appropriately.

Young people benefit greatly from living in an environment that is maintained to a good standard. There are appropriate maintenance arrangements in place to ensure any damage and routine maintenance is quickly addressed. The home provides young people with both private and communal space to meet their needs. It is comfortably furnished, well equipped and kept clean and tidy. It is suitably located in a residential area, with good access to transport links.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The management and organisation of the home is professional and delivers very positive outcomes for the young people. The Registered Manager is an effective manager and knows the needs of the young people well. She has a broad knowledge of operational issues in the home and manages the staff in a way that is extremely competent. There are very good relationships between the management team and the staff.

The Statement of Purpose is current, up to date and communicated effectively to all the relevant parties. Young people receive appropriate information about the home in a user friendly format.

There is a well established and competent staff team working at the home who are highly enthusiastic and motivated by their enjoyment of working with young people and watching them progress. Young people continue to benefit because staff manage their time well and are well deployed. The manager ensures a sufficient number of staff are available to support young people's needs successfully.

The principles of staff professional development and ongoing training are given a high priority and ensure that staff are highly skilled in meeting the needs of the young people. The Registered Manager has set up a system for supporting staff including regular staff supervision and ensuring that there is a senior staff member on duty at all times. In addition, there is always a senior

manager on call and available to staff. There are good systems in place so that there are opportunities for discussion about individual young people and the running of the home generally. This helps to provide a consistent approach to the young people.

Efficient systems are in place to scrutinise the quality of the care being delivered and a strong management team communicate effectively to ensure that any patterns or trends are addressed. As a result, the manager is confident that the quality assurance reflects young people's experience of the provision.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding and is clearly shown throughout the young people's placement, assessment and care plans and the support offered by the staff group. Each young person has a permanent and private record of their progress, each of their files is very well organised and detailed. The files contains daily logs and information about goals and also any progress made.

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 young people are encouraged to manage their own finances through help with budgeting, specifically by not allowing them to use future pocket money to pay for an unauthorised taxi use, which leaves them with no pocket money for a number of weeks (NMS 11.8)
- contact placing authority to request statutory reviews when due for any child, if the placing authority has not arranged the review. (NMS 3.3)