

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	26 August 2010
Inspector	David Morgan
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	17 March 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 is one of a group of four homes that have been set up to provide intake and assessment services for a local council. It provides short-term care and accommodation for up to three young people aged 12 to 16 who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties.

The home is a large, detached property located amongst similar houses. The ground floor comprises a lounge, dining room, kitchen, staff office and toilet. The first floor has three bedrooms for young people, a bathroom and a staff sleeping-in room. There is also a large rear garden. There are currently three young people living at the home, all of whom contributed to this inspection. The home is situated within walking distance of local amenities. There are local bus routes to the large city nearby as well as surrounding areas.

Summary

This full, unannounced inspection considered all areas of care. The overall quality rating remains outstanding, which is an excellent achievement for all concerned. No actions are raised and only one recommendation regarding a minor issue. No actions or recommendation were raised last time.

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 last time.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy excellent, healthy, home cooked meals that meet their dietary needs. High quality, fresh ingredients are chosen and menus take into account a variety of cultures; in addition there are themed nights that are used to learn more about other countries. Currently, Ramadan is being respected through meals, discussions and displays. Young people are actively involved in all aspects of meal planning and preparation according to their ages. Older young people have opportunities to budget and prepare meals for everyone, including visitors. Meals and mealtimes are given a high priority by staff and are used as important social occasions. Overall, young people learn a substantial amount about healthy living during their short stays, which they are able to discuss and demonstrate.

Young people experience no delays in accessing health services such as the looked after children nurse and the general practitioner. This is an important benefit that has been established by the staff team with partner agencies. Staff act promptly and with initiative to address any health issues. Similarly, there are particularly good medication procedures that include thorough support and training by a national pharmacy. Some staff are trained to train other staff on medication issues, which is excellent practice.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The welfare of young people is promoted as fully as possible. Staff ensure that any risks to young people are identified, assessed and addressed. Staff have an excellent understanding of child protection issues both inside and outside the home and there are strong links with relevant agencies, such as the police. Young people's privacy, for example, is respected extremely well in terms of their bedrooms, bathing and the security of information that is held about them. Young people's privacy is also protected by thorough bedroom-search procedures with records that require comments by young people themselves. This gives young people full confidence in the system. They are similarly confident in the staff team's ability to provide them with excellent support and guidance on staying safe outside the home, for example in preventing and reducing the impact of young people being absent without authority. In the event of a young person being absent without authority, comprehensive checks are made of the locality and of relevant addresses.

Young people display a thorough understanding of the complaints process, for instance regarding the timescales that are used, and feel able to use it. One young person said, 'I'm happy here; they are fair. If they weren't fair I'd ring my social worker'. The procedure is thorough with particularly good attention to detail. This contributes to young people feeling secure in the home. Similarly, excellent relationships between all staff and young people contribute to a low level of bullying. Young people are taught about bullying and full activity programmes help to ensure that opportunities for negative behaviours are minimized. Any significant events relating to young people are promptly reported to the young person's social worker. The team fully understand the importance of not working in isolation from other professionals and this increases the benefits to young people, for example in terms of the decisions made. Any failure to protect, or allegation, is fully investigated and acted upon.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour through analysis of any negative behaviours and planning to prevent reoccurrences. Young people are fully involved in this excellent process and are rewarded for success. Success of any sort is applauded. Certificates are issued and displayed. A clear behaviour management policy and procedure is in place and the organisation is setting an unusually high standard by having their training accredited.

The home provides young people with high levels of physical safety and security. For example, fire safety issues are routinely addressed and new young people and staff are always trained. Improvements to the fire drill procedures are underway to ensure staff training is as thorough as possible. High safety standards are also maintained by an exceptionally thorough staff recruitment process. This procedure has been improved to ensure that a high calibre of individuals is employed and further improvements are in-hand. Various personnel and also the young people contribute to the assessment of candidates who are tested in a variety of ways. This is a substantial contribution to young people's welfare and helps to minimize staff turnover.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The high standard of individual support provided to each young person is a key feature of the home. The staff team provide a particularly high level of consistency by means of effective communication in records and meetings. Emotional and behavioural difficulties are methodically assessed and recorded. Staff have access to advice from psychologists every week, which is exceptionally good practice. Records show that young people are consulted and in agreement

with their programmes of support. All religious, cultural or linguistic needs are addressed promptly, such as the provision of prayer mats. Young people reported that they learn about other religions and that all people are equal.

Young people understand that they are expected to be fully involved in formal education. This is supported well by a specialist education team from the local authority. Timetable packages are created, when necessary, to ensure every young person maximises their educational opportunities, for example with education at home. Educational mentors are available too. The education of young people is promoted very clearly and achievements are acknowledged.

The emphasis on individual care and on learning is reflected in excellent, wide ranging, activity packages that keep young people constructively occupied. These too are designed with young people themselves and provide high levels of activity and new experiences both locally and further afield. They are also used by staff to challenge and assess young people and to encourage positive behaviour. One young person said, 'Its good because they take you on trips; whenever you need something you just go to your key worker'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

A key function of the home is to assess young people and contribute to moving them to an appropriate placement. This process is very thorough and records show how the opinion of the team develops through each young person's stay. This is also the placement planning for every young person. The process is outstanding particularly in terms of its construction, amount of detail, and degree of involvement of young people. Improvements have occurred to ensure that equality and diversity issues are considered in detail throughout the process.

A critical part of the success of the placement planning process is the system of reviews. There is a clear and well-addressed internal process as well as the statutory process. Staff have improved their practices to ensure appropriate attendance by social workers, wherever possible. Once again, there is excellent consultation with young people, in this instance before, during and after meetings. Prompt attention to review conclusions is assured by staff keeping their own minutes. For example, any changes to contact arrangements are fully supported in whatever way is agreed. Young people are engaged in constructive and realistic discussions about their family circumstances and meetings are supported well.

Every young person benefits from close personal attention when they are admitted and when they leave the home. Staff fully understand these sensitive events and achieve very positive working relationships quickly. These important occasions are handled extremely well. One young person said how surprised and pleased she was with her admission process: 'I did an introductory visit; it's wicked here'. Subsequently, there is excellent practice undertaken to encourage young people to make appropriate decisions about their lives. They have full involvement in individual planning and there are regular young people's meetings that are structured and attended by each young person. Any matters raised by young people are fully addressed by staff and managers. In addition, young people can become involved in a young people's council at which they help to improve company-wide practices; this is excellent practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live in the home for up to three months in most cases. This is insufficient time for substantial attention to pathway planning. However, in the time available, young people are systematically exposed to excellent opportunities to improve their independence skills. As well as addressing emotional and behavioural difficulties well, staff also improve young people's social skills, their domestic abilities and self-confidence. Young people also learn to use their time constructively. All these matters contribute significantly to improving their opportunities later. The house itself plays an important part in providing a particularly good domestic standard for young people to learn from and aspire to. It is well located in a quiet and safe location and has few institutional features.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The organisation provides excellent attention to individual needs and provides above average opportunities for young people to learn positive things about their diverse community. This process is clearly reflected in each young person's records, which are very thorough and show their direct involvement. Staff are trained in equality and diversity and are themselves from a range of cultural backgrounds. The paperwork includes prompts to ensure that issues of race or religion, for example, are addressed. Procedures also ensure that there are routine opportunities to consider individual cultural issues in detail. Staff use impromptu opportunities to discuss subjects, such as disability and sexuality. Overall the policy is highly effective because young people quickly learn about equality and diversity and that they are important subjects.

The principles set out in the equality and diversity policy fully reflect the comprehensive Statement of Purpose. New admissions are guided through a well-presented children's guide that also reflects the same document. A substantial range of information is provided to young people in writing and verbally and some is displayed on the notice board. The Statement of Purpose itself is insufficiently clear, however, about the home's function regarding the intake and assessment contract and its registration categories; this has minimal impact on young people though.

Details in the Statement of Purpose include the staffing arrangements. Good staffing levels are maintained during the day and night and staff display a high level of competence. They are well-organised and act coherently to meet the needs of young people. An example of excellent practice is the daily 'de-briefs' that are undertaken. These meetings allow staff to reflect on issues and also challenge each others practice. Other areas of staff support are also outstanding. For example, staff supervision meetings have clear, detailed templates that are different for each grade of staff. This helps to ensure that each area of work in the home is properly checked. There is a similarly thorough annual appraisal process.

Young people benefit from very competent staff who are exceptionally well trained. All staff consider the training to be of a high standard. Training opportunities are excellent in terms of their range, frequency and organisation; they have a direct bearing on positive outcomes for young people and serve to stimulate and encourage staff. Any gaps in the training of individual staff are identified and addressed promptly and there are opportunities for progression, for example in management.

There is an excellent standard of monitoring by both the home and the organisation that exceeds the required level in terms of quality and quantity. This is indicative of particularly

effective leadership at all levels, from the registered person to shift leaders. The manager recently obtained promotion outside the company but appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure standards are maintained. Opportunities exist for senior staff to undertake monitoring assessments of the home, which has benefits for their professional development and for the service. Attention is paid to relatively minor details and this helps ensure that standards are maintained at a high level throughout 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 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 the Statement of Purpose accurately describes what the home sets out to do for children, with regard to its assessment function and conditions of registration. (NMS 1.1)