

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sonya Robinson
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Date of last inspection	10 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

The home provides care and accommodation for two young people between the ages of 11 to 17 years. They can also provide transitional care for young people entering into adulthood for a specified period of time.

Accommodation is provided over two floors; the ground floor includes a kitchen, lounge, dining room and conservatory. Young people have their own rooms which are located on the upper floor. The house is set in a semi-rural location but is close to local shops, and there are transport links to and from a city centre and a nearby town. The service also has access to local community resources.

On the day of inspection two young people were present and participated within the inspection process.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service overall, with some elements that are outstanding.

Young people benefit from positive relationships with staff, they are afforded a range of facilities and opportunities to encourage and support a healthy lifestyle, to develop their life skills and to reach outstanding outcomes from education.

Staff benefit from a good level of training and support, and they work well with other professionals to meet the complex needs of young people in areas such as emotional and physical well-being.

Minor shortfalls in meeting the national minimum standards have not adversely affected the care given to children.

The overall quality rating is good.

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 previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive a nutritious and very healthy balanced diet that promotes their good health and well-being. Menu planning is discussed within the household by all concerned and includes a variety of foods from other cultures which young people are encouraged to try. This means they learn to appreciate and enjoy a wide selection of foods. Menu planning takes account of young people's individual tastes, preferences and needs. Young people are routinely involved in developing independence skills by participating in shopping and helping to prepare some meals with guidance from staff so that they are able to cook a selection of meals.

Young people's health needs are identified in the pre-placement planning meeting and a health plan shows how these needs are to be addressed. The home has very good working relationships

with local health services, and children's good health is promoted because they are quickly registered with a local General Practitioner, dentist and other appropriate health care services. The home follows up all health checks that are outstanding when a new child is admitted, to ensure that all children are up to date with vaccinations and so on. The home ensures that referrals are made for specialist health assessments where necessary. Excellent systems are in place to routinely monitor children's health, and action is taken promptly to address any concerns.

Staff follow detailed guidance relating to the receipt, administration, recording and disposal of prescribed medicines. This means that children receive the medication they need at the appropriate times. All medicines are stored safely in a suitable, locked cabinet. This means that young people's health needs overall are met to an exceptionally high standard.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's need for privacy is respected and their dignity is promoted through recognition of the individual needs of each young person, all of which is documented. Confidential information is held securely in the locked office. All complaints are acted upon quickly and the appropriate action is taken. Young people said they felt able to access the complaints procedure if necessary and it is also discussed regularly in young people's meetings. The information from this and key worker sessions is used effectively to improve the care given to each individual child.

Young people said they feel safe and know that there are procedures in place to keep them so. Effective monitoring of the home's practices and safeguarding procedures ensures that staff know how to protect children from the risk of abuse and how to respond in the event of any concerns.

Bullying is not currently an issue in the home. Young people learn to respect others through the good examples provided by the management and staff team who work in an anti-oppressive manner.

No young person has been missing from home but good procedures are in place to ensure that staff act promptly to promote their safety in such circumstances. Children respond well to the nurturing environment provided and learn through positive relationships and active encouragement to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Physical interventions and sanctions are not a feature of this service. Instead the emphasis is on rewarding positive behaviour. Individual risk assessments are in place though they are brief in parts and are not always documented.

New staff undergo comprehensive suitability checks before they start work with young people. The home maintains regular health and safety checks and the associated certificates are in place. This means that the home is a safe place to live.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are extremely well supported and receive individualised care in accordance with their assessed needs. The home encourages young people to reach their potential by ensuring

they receive high quality support to develop new skills and to live as fulfilling a life as possible. Children receive specialist support where necessary, such as health professionals to ensure that children receive consistent and appropriate support and encouragement. Young people thrive in this environment, making rapid progress in all areas of development. Young people scored the support they received from the home as 10 out of 10.

Education is actively promoted and plays an important part in the lives of young people. Their educational needs are identified in written plans and there are clear arrangements for meeting their needs. Staff see education as important and create a stimulating environment that supports and encourages young people to learn and study. Young people know that they are expected to attend education and conform with this expectation; they each have access to the internet, newspapers, books, and educational materials to aid their learning. Staff demonstrate a commitment to the educational needs of young people and where necessary act as advocates to ensure that young people's opinions are listened to. Feedback from schools is consistently good showing a high degree of satisfaction with the delivery of care at the home and the progress that the young people are making.

Staff actively support and encourage young people to take part in various leisure activities. Young people pursue particular interests, such as art and sport. They get opportunities to develop confidence in their skills, enjoy their leisure time and try new things. Staff are excellent at encouraging young people to take part in outdoor activities and enjoy new experiences.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home's records provide a good insight into the individual needs of young people and plans in place to meet them. Young people have written placement plans identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them. Staff put the plans into practice very well and keep detailed records about young people's progress and experiences. Young people's placement plans are reviewed regularly to make sure that they are up to date and continue to meet their needs. Staff actively seek young people's views and ensure that they are listened to and their views about their lives taken into account.

Young people have regular contact with their families, where appropriate, to help them maintain and build positive relationships. Staff ensure young people have suitable regular contact and that the arrangements promote young people's welfare.

Young people's views are sought and considered about each aspect of their care. Careful attention to their needs and wishes ensures that children have the opportunity to influence their own lives. Young people feel they are listened to and their views are respected.

There are policies and procedures with regards to admission to and discharge from the home so that it is carefully planned to cause the least disruption to the young people and to help them settle into their new placement as well as possible. There have been no admissions or discharges from this service for over a year. This means that the current group of young people have settled within the service and are making good progress, which has become outstanding in some areas.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Staff give a very high level of support to young people to prepare for adult life by encouraging them to take more responsibility for themselves suitable to their age and levels of maturity. Young people routinely learn skills through taking part in the running of the home, such as shopping, planning meals, cooking, using money and household tasks. Also, they are encouraged to develop their personal care, organisational and social skills. This includes taking driving lessons with an accredited firm with the relevant permissions, when age appropriate.

Young people live in a very homely and comfortable house. The home is decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard. Young people have chosen the décor in their bedrooms and have enough personal space to meet their needs. Young people refer to the service as home and they told me it was 'the best place'. Their belongings and personal objects are all around the house. This demonstrates the value placed upon young people to develop the service as their own home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive equal opportunities to develop their own potential and interests. The service demonstrates that the individual care needs of young people are identified and that direct work with young people is good and is even outstanding in parts. Their care needs are routinely monitored through robust systems. This ensures that the individual care needs of young people are met.

Young people know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be looked after. The children's guide provides important information about the home in a way that is easily understood by young people. Also, the home has a clear written statement for parents and social workers of how the home operates and plans to meet young people's needs.

Staff are well supported by the management of the home and have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. They know who they contact for support. The staff team are very close and this aids the continuity of care and support for the young people placed. Team meetings take place regularly every month to allow the whole staff team to discuss and review individual young people. They also discuss the running of the home, staff development and training, and look at ways to improve the service they offer. Staff are well supported on a daily basis, but new staff are not consistently having their formal one-to-one supervision regularly documented within the timescale recommended in the standards. This is used to monitor their performance, accountability and identify their individual development needs.

Young people are looked after by a staff team who have a wide range of skills and experience. The home are actively looking at training to ensure that a minimum of 80% of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. The staff team reflects the cultural backgrounds of the young people living in the home and provides both positive male and female role models for young people. The numbers of staff on duty meet the needs of young people. This includes the support they need for activities, visits and appointments.

The home has good systems in place to review the quality of care provided. The systems identify areas for improvement and take action to ensure that the home meets young people's needs and promotes their welfare.

Young people's records are well written, organised and contain up-to-date information about them, including the relevant documents from placing authorities. This means that the home's written records provide a good picture of individual young people's needs, development and progress.

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
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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 all unnecessary risks to the health or safety of the environment and to individuals are identified and where possible eliminated (NMS 26.2)
- ensure new staff receive at least one and a half hours of one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff, fortnightly, during the first six months of their employment (NMS 28.2)
- ensure that a minimum of 80% of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in the Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)