

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Jacqui Gosling
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	26 January 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 is one of a group of homes operated by the same organisation. The home is one of a group of homes that are part of a tendering contract with a local council. Accommodation is provided for three young people between the ages of 12 to 16. Placements are long term.

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, conservatory, staff office and toilet. There is a medium sized rear garden. The first floor has three bedrooms for children, a bathroom and a staff sleeping-in room.

The home is situated within walking distance of local shops. There are local bus routes to access to nearest city and surrounding areas.

Summary

This announced full inspection concentrated on key national minimum standards, focusing on all outcome areas. The inspection also considered how the home is managed and how staff are supported. Two young people gave their view of living at the home during this inspection.

The home is judged as good overall with three outcome areas being judged as outstanding. Young people are receiving an excellent level of care and support because staff are enthusiastic, dedicated and well informed about their needs and circumstances. Young people are clearly benefiting from living in a home that has a strong emphasis on promoting their health, welfare and safety. They are fully consulted and involved in their care and living arrangements. The manager and senior staff provide effective, practical leadership that supports the staff to deliver consistent care and support.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two recommendations were made following the last inspection that took place in January 2009. Both have been fully addressed.

There are now appropriate systems in place to ensure the records maintained of fire drills comply with national minimum standards. The conservatory is now heated as recommended.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary and health needs. They are encouraged to be involved in planning, shopping and cooking according to their abilities, interests and as preparation for independent living. Staff complete training in food hygiene as required and follow the Safer Food Better Business guidelines published by The Food Standards Agency to ensure good practice in the kitchen environment.

The health and care needs of young people are identified and updated regularly. A clear plan for each young person details how their specific and general health issues are to be addressed.

All young people are registered with the required health professionals. Staff, in partnership with the person with parental responsibility, actively seek out further services when required to meet the needs of the young people. For example, child and adolescent mental health service. A record is kept of the outcomes of all medical appointments to ensure any ongoing concerns are addressed. This means the young people receive care that actively promotes their wellbeing and health.

The files for the young people contain signed medical consent forms from the person with parental responsibility for vaccinations, preventative inoculations and include the administration of household medication and first aid. Staff administer medication safely and the systems in the house are effective, ensuring that young people get the medication they need. The wellbeing of young people is further promoted by staff undertaking training in first aid

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Information held on behalf of all young people is correctly stored in lockable facilities. Staff are aware of their responsibilities to promote privacy and confidentiality and their practice is consistent with the home's guidance. Some young people commented 'I am treated with respect. I feel comfortable with staff because they treat me fairly'. The facilities and arrangements for showering and bathing ensure the young people have their privacy respected.

The welfare of young people is promoted by a robust complaints policy. There is an effective system in place to record any concerns made known by young people. The organisation ensures staff are equipped and trained with the knowledge and understanding to fulfil their role and responsibilities regarding protection and safeguarding. The procedures in the home fully comply with the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures.

Young people know that bullying is not tolerated and they are confident that staff will intervene to ensure they are protected from bullying by others should the need arise. Young people say they 'feel safe living here'. Young people rarely abscond from the home. However, if they do their safety is promoted when their whereabouts are unknown as staff follow the agreed reporting procedures for these circumstances. This results in practices that are consistent with wider police protocols for reporting young people who abscond.

Young people are assisted to develop appropriate behaviour through the encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. Behaviour management policy and strategies have as their prime objective the creation of a safe, supportive environment. Staff have completed the required training to ensure that should a physical intervention become necessary it is consistent with guidance. Records demonstrate that very few physical interventions occur. There is positive interaction between the staff and the young people and lots of friendly banter. Staff appear very comfortable with their role and records identify they clearly understand the need for boundaries while maintaining a high quality relationship between themselves and young people.

Young people live in a home that provides for their physical safety and security. There are risk assessments for all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds including serious incident planning; the behaviour of the young people and their activities, which are updated as required.

The records kept in the home show that safe procedures are in place to protect young people from fire. There are records to show that the fire systems are regularly tested. Staff and young people undertake fire drills in excess of requirements. However, despite it being highlighted in the monitoring systems of the home a night time drill has not been completed during the last year. Some doors designated as fire exits do not comply with regulations as a key is required to unlock the door. Relevant certificates show that regular servicing and maintenance is completed on all gas and electrical equipment. Certificates of Public and Employer liability are displayed as required.

There are effective systems in place to ensure all staff that work with the young people have successfully passed all the checks that are required. The files contain all the required information. This careful selection and vetting of staff ensures young people are not being exposed to any potential risks.

All visitors to the home are monitored and required to sign the visitors book and shown the fire exits when they first visit the home. This is good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The progress and development of young people is well documented in their files and shows how they are supported and assessed throughout their stay. Specialist services offer therapeutic work and input to enable the young people to recover from traumatic events in their lives. External services are requested as necessary to meet the needs of individual young people.

All staff attend equality and diversity training. There is a culturally diverse staff team who arrange cultural evenings and show the young people how to cook traditional meals from Asia and the West Indies. To promote knowledge and understanding of different cultures young people are also encouraged to choose a country from the atlas displayed in the home and plan, shop and cook a meal from that country. Young people also research information so they can answer a questionnaire which explores different traditions, laws and so on from that country. This is a proactive approach to encouraging young people to learn about living in a multi-cultural society.

The educational progress of young people in school is actively supported and encouraged by the staff. When young people have not been attending school prior to being accommodated at the home or are reluctant to re-engage with education, staff are proactive in liaising with the local authority education department and looked after child in education service and other agencies to ensure all young people receive an education in line with their age, educational needs, interests and potential. All files contain personal education plans, individual education plans and statements of special education needs if appropriate. However, some personal education plans are out of date or have very little detail. Staff promote and encourage young people to make the best of their educational opportunities.

All young people are supported and encouraged to participate in hobbies and activities of their choice within and outside of the home. Staff are observed to engage with young people and records confirm that time is used enjoyably and constructively in and out of the home. Staff ensure that there is a balance between supervised and unsupervised time in the day if appropriate for individual young people, that is risk assessed and takes into consideration the age, gender, abilities and interests of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. All young people are assisted to communicate their views in discussion with their key carers and during young people's meetings. They also have regular visits from an independent advocacy service if they do not wish to discuss particular subjects with the staff at the home.

Young people have their needs assessed and written plans recognise the need for different routines during the week and at weekends. The records show that staff respect and value diversity and have a proactive approach to working with external agencies and other professionals. Consequently, all young people receive the individualised care they need whilst living at the home.

However, when young people are placed following a breakdown in their previous placements, it is important that local authority social workers arrange for their statutory reviews to be held within 28 days of their placements to ensure their current placement plans address all their needs.

In discussion the registered manager confirms that an assessment is completed before any young people are placed in the home. However, the assessment records kept in the home do not show that the impact on the young people already living there is taken into account or that staff have the necessary training to enable them to manage the behaviour of young people who are assessed as being on the autistic spectrum appropriately.

In accordance with their care plans all young people are encouraged to maintain contact with members of their families. Staff clearly understand how important communication and contact with their family is for the young people and support their contact arrangements. The records indicate and some of the young people say that they 'do not feel isolated from their family'.

Significant time is taken to build relationships between the staff and young people. Staff have clear expectations of appropriate behaviour. Young people are observed to freely initiate interaction and seek help from the various staff members on duty.

The wellbeing of young people is positively promoted as they are all allocated a key carer to ensure their continuing care needs are met. Their views are ascertained formally during meetings with their key carer and at young people's meetings and on an informal basis every day. Therefore, young people benefit from receiving support from staff that is focused on their needs and achievements.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people say they 'are being supported to develop their life skills and learn about independent living'. They are provided with a range of opportunities, which include practical activities and domestic routines to help them develop their independent living skills. Pathway meetings are held as required, when social workers delay these meetings, staff are proactive in requesting these meetings take place as soon as possible. The home has put together a

independent living skills pack for young people, which will assist them in their preparation for living independently.

All young people confirm they are encouraged to go shopping and supported by staff to choose their own clothes and personal requisites.

Young people enjoy the benefit of living in a home that is designed, decorated and furnished to offer a homely environment. The home offers sufficient space to meet the different care needs of all the young people and ensure their privacy is not compromised.

Photographs of the young people and collages of their trips and activities are displayed throughout the home and this creates a pleasant domestic style environment that gives young people a sense of belonging.

Young people live in a well maintained house that benefits from regular maintenance. There are effective precautions to ensure the security of the home from access by unauthorised persons, which do not compromise or have an adverse effect on the care of young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people, parents, staff and placing authorities have access to a Statement of Purpose and young people's guide, which outlines the principles, practice and the services that they can expect from the home. The Statement of Purpose has been updated recently and a copy forwarded to Ofsted as required.

The manager ensures that young people live in a home that is well organised around their needs. In discussion staff show they are aware of and understand the stated aims and objectives of the service which are consistent with the Statement of Purpose. Young people are well advised about what the home does through information given to them in a child-friendly booklet.

There is a clear staffing structure with clear lines of accountability in the home. The home has clear deputising arrangements and there is a formal on-call system if additional support is needed. Staff duty rotas and the manner in which staff are deployed confirm that the home ensures sufficient staff on the duty at all times. Staff are supported by senior members of staff who are sufficiently experienced and competent to lead the shift.

Supervision covers the required topics and is undertaken in accordance with requirements. Equality and diversity is now a standing item at each supervision. All staff have personal development plans and their appraisals are completed as required.

Staff undertake a comprehensive training programme. The number of staff achieving the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People exceeds requirements. However, the home has currently and previously admitted young people who has are on the autistic spectrum and none of the staff have undertaken any training to assist them to work with and understand children and young people with autism.

There are systems in place to monitor the daily lives of the young people currently living in the home. regulation 33 visits are undertaken monthly to monitor the overall care and welfare of

the young people. The reports are robust and thoroughly assess the records and physical environment to ensure the home is a good environment for young people. Staff complete an action plan to report on what action is being taken to rectify any issues identified by this visit. The manager also undertakes effective and comprehensive monitoring of all the files and records as required.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual records for the young people in the home are comprehensive, their needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. They contain a range of information about young people's history and progress, which matches the requirements set out in Children's Homes Regulations 2001.

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):

- implement the requirements of the local fire authority, specifically ensure all doors designated as fire doors open without use of a key (NMS 26.7)
- ensure at least four fire drills, including evacuation of staff and children from the building and a fire drill held at night take place in a 12 month period (NMS 26.8)
- ensure each young person has a personal education plan setting out a record of their educational achievements and is specifically up to date (NMS 14.4)
- contact placing authorities to request statutory reviews when due for any young person, if they do not arranged the review (NMS 3.3)
- ensure both the needs of the young person concerned and the likely effects of their admission upon the existing group of residents are taken into account and recorded in decisions on admission to the home (NMS 5.7)
- ensure staff receive training and development opportunities that equip them with the skills required to meet the needs of the children, specifically working with children who have autism. (NMS 31.1)