

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspection date	25/03/2011
Inspector	Steve Pearson
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Date of last inspection	14/07/2010
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 setting provides up to three long-term placements for young people aged from 11 to 17 years. The accommodation consists of three single bedrooms and staff sleep-in facilities. There are communal areas for eating, studying and relaxing.

The home is in a residential area, approximately five miles from a city centre and is close to public transport and shopping and leisure facilities. The registered provider is a limited company which carries on a number of other children's homes.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was an unannounced, interim inspection. It assessed the key national minimum standards (NMS) associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the four recommendations made at the previous inspection on 14 July 2010.

At the time of the inspection, three young people were living in the children's home. Two young people were in the home during the inspection and they spoke to the inspector about the care they receive.

As a result of this inspection, Ofsted has made three requirements and four recommendations.

The arrangements in place to promote the safety of young people are sound.

The acting manager and staff promote young people's need for privacy, they understand how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse, there is no bullying and young people rarely go missing from the home for a significant period of time. The premises are maintained in a safe condition and suitable staff recruitment procedures are in place.

However, complaints made about the service are not always recorded. There is also weakened accountability for the use of restraints because of the reliance on jargon to describe how the restraint was carried out. Additionally, a restraint hold has been used which has potential for significant harm. However, the registered persons were unaware of such concerns and immediately pledged not to use it again. The risk assessments for hazards that may affect young people are not adequately informative and the proportion of staff who should be qualified remains below the figure recommended by the national minimum standards.

Improvements since the last inspection

The four recommendations from the previous inspection relate to leaving care plans, policies and procedures, the number of staff who are appropriately qualified and training.

The arrangements in place to help prepare young people for independent living have improved because pathway plans are now in place for them.

The staff are able to be clear about policies and procedures to follow. Previously there were several sets of policies and procedures but these have now been amalgamated into one set.

Sixty per cent of the staff are qualified at Level 3 in the National Vocational Qualification in Care. However, this is below the figure of 80% recommended by the national minimum standard. Consequently, a recommendation made at the previous inspection has been repeated.

The staff team have received training in child protection, behaviour management and the safe handling of medication and so they are knowledgeable about these important issues.

The service has therefore met three of the four recommendations made at the previous inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people can make and receive telephone calls in private. The staff are aware of the limits of confidentiality and know they must pass on concerns about young people's welfare. There have been some searches of young people's bedrooms since the previous inspection. There is weak accountability for these occasions because not all the necessary information is being recorded. It is also not always clear from the records how any young person's welfare would have been at risk had the search not taken place.

There have been two recorded complaints since the previous inspection. It was unclear if these were upheld or not and this was discussed with the acting manager. Most issues are dealt with quickly and informally. For example, one young person said, 'I know how to make a complaint but I've never had to as I just tell the staff and they sort it'. Not all complaints made about the service have been recorded,

even though the registered persons have investigated the concerns. This means there is weakened accountability about how concerns are dealt with and what the outcomes are.

The staff receive regular training in child protection and they understand how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. The acting manager receives advanced level training and this will be used to help them provide training to the staff. There is very little bullying because there are good levels of staffing, an appropriate group of young people and a stimulating environment. This can be summarised by one young person who said, 'there's no bullying because we're never bored and we wouldn't do it anyway because we all get on well together'.

Young people rarely go missing from the children's home and when this does happen it is usually only for a few hours. However, on such occasions, the reason the young person gave for going absent is not being recorded. The details regarding the circumstances of their return are also minimal because only the date and time is recorded. There is no record of their mood or condition at the time of return. This means it is harder to address the causes of young people going missing and any concerns about any harm they may have come to while absent from the home.

The acting manager and staff use rewards and occasional sanctions to help encourage positive behaviour. One young person said, 'sanctions are fair and behaviour has to be quite bad before you get one'. Young people also said, 'restraints are very rare, and if it's done it's for the right reason for example, because the young person is kicking off'. Young people's views are recorded after each occasion when a restraint is used and the acting manager monitors each recording to ensure it is appropriate. There have been 12 incidents of restraint since the previous inspection. The style of the recording of restraints means it is hard to be clear about how a restraint was conducted. This is because those recording the details rely on technical jargon to describe how a young person was held. This weakens the description of what happened because not all people who may need to read the records subsequently will understand what this wording means. Additionally, the staff have been taught and on one occasion used a type of restraint hold that the government have banned in secure children's homes. Although use of the hold is not banned in other types of children's home, there is still significant potential for harm. The registered persons and the staff in the children's home were unaware that the use of the hold was banned in such homes and they pledged to stop using it immediately.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. However, risk assessments regarding the behaviour of young people are not fully informative because there is no estimate of the seriousness or likelihood of each hazard.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
16	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	25/03/2011
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of restraint, a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include a description of the measure used. In particular, the description must not be based solely on technical jargon (Regulation 17 (4)(c))	25/03/2011
26	ensure unnecessary risks to the health or safety of children accommodated in the home are identified and so far as possible eliminated. In particular this is in relation to the use of a restraint hold know as a 'seated double embrace'. (Regulation	08/04/2011

	23(c))	
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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):

- record the relevant information after conducting the search of any bedroom and only search rooms if there is a risk to the welfare of the young person or others (NMS 9.8)
- record the necessary information when a young person goes missing from the children's home. In particular this means the reason given by the young person for going missing and the full circumstances of their return (NMS 19.6)
- include a measure of likelihood and severity when assessing the risks of hazards to young people (NMS 26.2)
- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete a National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People or an equivalent qualification. (NMS 29.5)