

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC067561
Inspection date	7 May 2009
Inspector	Barbara Davies
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	17 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 registered to provide care for three children of either gender between the age of 11 and under 18 years. It is a modern built town house in an urban area. It is domestic in style with modern fixtures and fittings. The accommodation is spread out over three floors. The ground floor has a kitchen/dining room leading to a laundry equipped with washing machine and tumble dryer. A sitting room is equipped with television and DVD facilities. The first floor has a bathroom with toilet/shower/bath and Jacuzzi facilities. There are also two children's bedrooms located on the first floor landing and a staff office doubles up as a sleeping-in room. A second staff sleep-in room is located on the second floor in close proximity to a bedroom for a third child. The staff room is en-suite and bathroom facilities provided are the same as on the first floor. External features include a garage and small front and rear gardens. Shopping and recreational facilities are within close proximity of the home and there are public transport links to the city centre. National rail links are also easily accessible.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection took place on 7 May 2009. Young people participated in the inspection. Following the previous inspection of the home in January 2009, the home was required to make improvements in some areas of Staying Safe and Organisation. These matters have been addressed. This inspection found that the home provides a settled environment for young people however some further shortfalls have been noted. Improvement is required to the recording procedures in relation to sanctions and physical intervention. Checks completed on agency staff are not consistently applied to make sure anyone who works in the home is suitable to work with children. There has been a breach of Regulations by not informing Ofsted of changes in the management of the home and therefore not allowing consideration of whether the new arrangements are suitable. Supervision of staff, although regular, does not take place at the frequency specified in standards.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Since the previous inspection of the home, the home's own child protection procedures have been reviewed and amended to be consistent with local area safeguarding procedures. Staff also know how to access the local area safeguarding procedures on the internet. The standard of recording in the record of sanctions and restraints has improved. An analysis of the effectiveness of each sanction and physical restraint is now analysed and detailed within the record as are the signatures of staff responsible for issuing the measure. However, aspects of information need more clarification such as the description of events leading to the sanction. A system has been introduced for verifying that all checks are completed on agency staff who work in the home. These have however not been consistently applied to all staff who have worked in the home since the previous inspection. Recordings in the daily log of events are now up to date, providing an accurate account of what occurs in the home. Improvements have been made to the décor in some parts of the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home recognises the need to encourage and promote a healthy lifestyle. Although planned menus show a varied, healthy and nutritious menu, these are seldom adhered to. Young people report that staff introduce new meals and talk to them about healthy eating options. Fruit is available for them to help themselves to.

Health needs are identified as young people are admitted to the home and examinations arranged with the doctor, dentist and optician to make sure they are in good health. There is evidence of good communication with responsible placing officers to consider the need for additional services, such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services although these are not always detailed within health plans. Arrangements for the administration and recording of medication are sound.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Good levels of privacy are afforded to young people. Their bedrooms are respected by staff as providing private space. Under normal circumstances, staff do not enter without knocking and receiving the permission of young people. Confidential information relating to young people is stored securely in the staff office.

Staff inform young people how they can make a complaint if dissatisfied with the standard of care they are receiving. Young people know that the young person's handbook also contains information that they can refer to. No complaints have been made since the previous inspection and young people say they are treated fairly and can resolve most issues through direct negotiation with staff.

The home trains staff in the child protection procedures to be followed in the event of a young person making a disclosure about abuse. Concerns about children's safety are appropriately referred to placing officers and to the local safeguarding board along with a request for a strategy meeting.

Some friction exists between young people but this is not identified as bullying by staff or by young people. Staff carefully manage the relationships between young people to reduce the potential for conflict and for bullying. The planning of daily activities keeps young people constructively occupied and minimises the opportunities for bullying to occur. The organising of group activities attempts to take into account the requests of all young people to avoid friction.

Incidents of young people being absent from the home have reduced since the previous inspection. Staff are familiar with the missing procedures protocol and know the action they must take to keep young people safe. Staff conduct searches of the local area in an attempt to locate them and persuade them to return to the home. If unable to do so, they are reported as missing to the police.

Overall, behaviour is well managed and incidents of physical intervention and sanctions are low. However, there is insufficient detail in the restraints record about the holds used and some sanctions do not happen immediately. There is an impact, particularly for young people who spend periods of time away from the home during the week. The prospect of returning to the home to ongoing sanctions makes it difficult for them to return. A safe environment is provided for young people and staff. Weekly checks on the fire alarm system and regular maintenance

of mechanical equipment such as boilers ensures that all equipment remains in good working order and is safe. Young people take part in fire drills so that they know what to do in the event of a fire.

Recruitment records were not inspected as part of this inspection but evidence on the checks completed for agency staff were sought. Whilst a system has been introduced for verifying that all checks have been completed for agency staff since the previous inspection, this is not consistently applied.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The emotional needs of young people are considered and responded to. Young people say that there is always someone on duty whom they can talk to. They said that staff 'know when something is wrong and spend time talking to them in an attempt to sort things out'. Keyworking sessions take place regularly and young people know they can request individual time with any member of staff. Young people have access to counselling services provided by an external agency. Referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health services are made in conjunction with placing authorities, if considered.

Young people are supported to pursue a range of education and career opportunities. The home works closely with the local education department to ensure that the assessed needs of young people are met. All young people currently have an education plan that is being closely adhered to with appropriate education resources having been identified such as attendance at residential special school or home tuition. Similarly, the close links established with Connexions help school leavers to access further education and work opportunities. Although faced with some resistance from young people, the home persists in encouraging them to attend and as a result helps them access the opportunities available.

Staff encourage young people to make constructive use of their leisure time and try to engage young people in at least one activity each day. Good use is made of community resources such as the cinema and bowling alley. Staff show young people how they can enjoy activities that cost very little, such as the library and the cinema, as well as those for which there is a cost implication. The home has only one vehicle and this sometimes limits the range of activities that can be offered, particularly at weekends when all young people are present.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Careful consideration is given to the dynamics of the group when admitting young people to the home. The home's admission procedures usually include a pre-admission risk assessment considering the impact of admission for all young people. Although this was considered prior to the last admission a written risk assessment was not completed. This shortfall has been identified by the external line manager and brought to the attention of the unit manager.

Staff clearly understand the needs of the young people and how they are to work with them. They work consistently with young people to help them achieve the objectives outlined in placement plans.

Young people have the opportunity to contribute to all aspects of their care. They are supported by staff to attend and make written contributions to statutory reviews to influence the decisions that are made. Weekly house meetings give them the opportunity to discuss menus, plan activities and express opinions about the way the home is run.

The home supports young people to maintain contact with family and friends. Reports compiled of each visit allow staff to monitor progress.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Although a reward system allows young people the potential to earn additional money, pocket money allowances are considerably lower than some have experienced in previous placements. The amounts allocated limit the potential for older young people to practise managing their finances and creates dependency on the home.

Communal areas of the home mostly offer a good standard of accommodation with the exception of minor damage to the paint and plasterwork on the walls in the hall and stairs. New carpets have been fitted to some communal areas and this has created a more pleasant environment. The overall appearance of young people's bedrooms lacks investment. Carpets are badly marked and furnishings sparse and dated. Most equipment is well-maintained but the dishwasher has been broken for some time and has an unpleasant smell when opened.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Information is published in two different formats, the one that is given to young people is more attractively presented and is easier for them to read. Promotion of equality and diversity is good with the different needs of young people being considered and planned for.

The home has experienced consistently, strong leadership during the previous nine months. However, the registered manager has recently resigned. Ofsted has not been informed of this in writing or of the new management arrangements for the home. Staff indicated that a temporary management appointment is in the process of being made. Further staff shortages are imminent with the resignation of another member of care staff. Appropriate arrangements have been identified to cover the shortfalls caused as a result of staff leaving. These mostly involve permanent staff working additional hours but this maintains consistency of care and lessens disruption for young people.

Core training such as Safe Hold and First Aid is provided to staff during their induction period with refresher training being provided at intervals. There is a training strategy in place and staff commence National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) in Caring for Children and Young People Level 3, once they have completed their induction training. The current ratio of staff having achieved this qualification does not meet the 80% target stated in standards but the home anticipates that this ratio will be met imminently as several staff are due to complete their training. The staff team has a good gender and age balance and young people recognise the different qualities that the team offers. Duty rosters are planned to ensure that each shift is staffed by people with sufficient skills, experience and knowledge of procedures.

Staff are well supported by each other and receive regular professional supervision with a senior member of staff. This however is not at the frequency specified in standards. The quality of staff practice and information recorded is subject to close scrutiny by the registered manager and the external lone manager of the home. The system in place is effective in identifying improvements required.

The progress of young people is closely monitored and recorded within individual files. The contents of files contain all the personal information required by regulations.

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
12	ensure that health plans contain information to show the strategies being used to manage young people's health, including issues such as drug abuse, alcohol abuse and enuresis (Regulation 20)	10 July 2009
22	include within each entry in the record of restraint, a description of the hold used or alternatively include a description of each type of hold in front of the record for people to refer to. Also ensure that timescales for sanctions are timely and take into account the personal circumstances of each young person (Regulation 17)	31 July 2009
24	improve the standard of accommodation provided by decorating and refurbishing carpets and furniture in children's bedrooms, replenishing crockery and cutlery and repairing the dishwasher (Regulations 15, 31)	31 July 2009
27	ensure that checks on the suitability of agency staff are applied consistently before all agency staff start to work shifts in the home (obtain evidence to demonstrate that all required checks, including references and CV, have been completed to ensure that agency staff are suitable to work with children) (Regulation 26)	31 July 2009
28	ensure that staff receive formal, professional supervision once a month (Regulation 27(4))	31 July 2009
34	ensure that Ofsted is informed in writing of the resignation of the Registered Manager and of the new management arrangements for the home (Regulation 37)	10 July 2009

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure that transport arrangements are reviewed (NMS 15)
- ensure that a review is conducted of pocket money allowances (NMS 6)