

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Barbara Davies
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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 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 whirlpool bath 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 interim inspection took place without notice being given to the home. All of the key standards in staying safe were inspected. The inspection also established whether the home has addressed actions and recommendations imposed following the key inspection in May 2009. At that time the Registered Manager was required to improve safety arrangements by introducing a system for vetting agency staff. Improvements were required to information recorded within health plans and records kept in relation to behaviour management. An action was also set to improve the decorative appearance of the home. The provider was also required to improve the organisation of the home by providing regular, formal support to staff and informing Ofsted of the new management arrangements of the home following the resignation of the Registered Manager. Young people were present during the inspection and shared their views about what it is like to live in the home.

This inspection found that an acting manager is in post, following the resignation of the Registered Manager in May 2009. An application to be considered as Registered Manager has not yet been submitted to Ofsted and this is an offence. However the acting manager has made excellent progress in addressing all the actions and recommendations set following the previous inspection. The home provides a stable environment for young people to live in with care being delivered by a cohesive and consistent staff team. Young people say they like living in the home and that: 'It is more settled and we are treated fairly and reasonably.'

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Improvements are noted within the way the home is organised with the acting manager taking responsibility for developing practice. The regularity and frequency at which staff receive formal supervision has increased. Changes in the staff team have been consolidated. Health plans for young people contain more detailed information about how staff attend to specific health needs of young people. While information recorded in sanctions and restraints records is more detailed and includes most of the information required by regulations, there is still insufficient information recorded about the holds used. An extensive redecoration programme has enhanced

the standard of accommodation provided and the dining room is better equipped with items of cutlery and crockery. Further improvements to facilities are planned.

Children are better safeguarded with the introduction of a system for verifying checks completed on agency staff. The home is currently fully staffed and use of agency staff is rare so the effectiveness of this system could not be established. The home has not yet conducted a review of pocket money arrangements or of the transport arrangements. There are no longer issues around availability of transport and the arrangements for pocket money will be re-examined during the next key inspection of the home.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

On admission to the home, young people are registered with local health practitioners and receive regular medical, dental and optical checks to ensure they remain in good health. Young people confirm that staff talk to them about the dangers of drug and alcohol use and offer some advice on personal and sexual health matters. The content of placement plans has been updated to be more specific to each young person and, where necessary, describe the strategies being used to deal with drug and alcohol issues.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Written guidance given to staff, together with training provided in key matters such as child protection, equip staff with the skills and knowledge of how to keep children safe. Young people's privacy is respected. They are given keys to their bedrooms which means they are able to enter whenever they want to. The practice of staff knocking before entering bedrooms and awaiting permission to enter, promotes young people's privacy should they be getting changed. Information held on young people is stored securely to prevent unauthorised people from gaining access to it. Staff are aware of the need to maintain confidentiality but also know that matters relating to child protection need to be shared with the local safeguarding team and case-holding social workers.

Young people are familiar with the home's complaints procedure and say any concerns they raise are taken seriously by the acting manager. They are satisfied with the manner in which concerns are investigated and resolved. Young people say that bullying is not an issue but 'there used to be a lot of disagreements which caused a bad atmosphere.' They report that staff intervene when problems occur and there is now less friction than previously.

Young people rarely go missing from the home but when they do, staff implement the home's missing person protocol and attempt to locate them and persuade them to return. A risk assessment approach is used to determine the length of time for which it is safe for a young person to be absent before reporting them as missing to the police. All necessary action is taken to ensure the safe return of a young person.

Behaviour in the home is well managed through the use of positive relationships and positive reinforcement of good behaviour. There has been a reduction in the number of sanctions and physical restraints and young people say that their behaviour has improved and 'staff try to deal with things in a way that doesn't make you angry.' Restraints and sanctions records contain most of the detail required by regulations but only contain a reference to the name of the hold

used and not a full description. Unless familiar with the holds, someone independent of the home would be unable to determine whether appropriate methods are being used to restrain young people.

The home provides a safe environment for young people to live in. Regular testing of fire equipment and annual testing of vehicles, mechanical and electrical devices ensure they remain in good working order.

Recruitment records for permanent staff were not inspected as part of this inspection but a system has now been implemented for assessing the suitability of agency staff to work in the home. The effectiveness of the system cannot be assessed as agency staff have not recently been used. The recruitment procedures for both permanent and agency staff will be inspected as part of the next key inspection of the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Activities are promoted. Issues reported at the previous inspection regarding insufficient cars to transport young people to the places they want to go have now been resolved.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Since the previous inspection in May 2009, decorative improvements have been made to all areas of the home including young people's bedrooms. Bedroom furniture has been replaced and a new dishwasher purchased. The financial investment in the home has improved the standard of accommodation provided and had a positive impact on the way that young people feel about their home.

At the previous inspection a recommendation was made that the home review its arrangements for pocket money. This has not occurred and it was not possible to establish whether a review is planned.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Organisation was not inspected in full during this inspection and it is mostly the shortfalls that are reported on. The quality rating for organisation has therefore not changed since the previous inspection. There is no longer a Registered Manager in post. An acting manager has been in post since May 2009, following the resignation of the Registered Manager. The suitability of the acting manager for the post she is currently holding has not been considered by Ofsted. This is due to an application for Registered Manager not yet having been submitted by the organisation. This constitutes an offence.

The acting manager, during her time in post, has made excellent progress in addressing actions and recommendations from previous inspections and staff have confidence in her abilities. Staff report receiving regular, formal supervision by a senior member of staff and this helps them reflect on their practice. One shortfall was however noted in the records that are held of

admissions and discharges. The address to which one young person was discharged was not noted within the record.

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
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 (Regulation 17)	12 February 2010
34	ensure that Ofsted is notified of the permanent management arrangements for the home and the acting manager submits a Registered Manager application to Ofsted for approval, if continuing in post (Regulation 38;CSA 11)	12 March 2010
34	ensure that the address to which young people are discharged is included in the admissions and discharge register. (Regulation 28)	12 February 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that a review is conducted of pocket money allowances. (NMS 6)