

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Joanna Heller
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Date of last inspection	19 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

This service is a registered children's home for up to seven young people aged 11 to 18 years with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is one of two homes owned by the company, both of which are in short walking distance of each other. The home is situated in a residential street within short walking distance of the local town centre with its amenities and transport links. Each young person has their own lockable bedroom which they are able to personalise. At the time of the inspection five young people were living in the home and three took part in the inspection.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection carried out as part of the annual inspection program. All key standards in each of the outcome areas were reviewed.

Staff and young people enjoy sound relationships based upon mutual respect. A change in approach to a therapeutic style is already having an impact on the home and being noticed by the young people. Young people are effectively safeguarded and their health and education promoted.

Staff do not on all occasions record sufficiently accurately and clearly aspects of care provided.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the manager was asked to ensure that the premises are maintained to a good standard. Management have addressed this ensuring all areas of the home are well maintained and decorated. The manager was also asked to ensure that the records of sanctions applied be maintained clearly. This record is now accurately maintained.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from a variety of nutritious home cooked foods which reflect young people's choices and cultural heritage. Young people are actively encouraged to be involved in the planning of meals and household shopping. Young people are able to help themselves to healthy snacks and confirm that there is always plenty to eat. Some young people cook meals for the other residents and staff a group. One young person is considering pursuing a catering career. Staff are trained in food hygiene and ensure safe storage of food. Changes to the kitchen/dining area have resulted in an open plan area which is the 'hub' of life in the home.

The home has good systems in place to promote healthy lifestyles for young people living in the home. Young people have access to appropriate health services such as doctors, dentists and opticians. Specialist health services such as counselling and substance misuse advisors are sought where required. Staff have been successful for some young people in reducing substance misuse through the use of healthy lifestyle opportunities such as gym membership. Where young people fail to attend appointments this is fed back to their social worker and explored in keyworking sessions.

Staff are trained in managing medication and ensure clear records are held of medication coming into and leaving the home. However, the home does not have sufficiently robust systems in place for the recording of the administration of medication. For example, in one case it was not possible to show whether a child had been administered one, or all three, of the medications prescribed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are trained in safeguarding young people and are aware what to do should an allegation of a child protection nature be made. Training is updated on yearly basis ensuring staff keep up to date with current practice. Young people say they feel safe and well cared for in the home. Staff work with young people in keyworking sessions to explore particular areas of keeping safe which are relevant to them, such as knife crime. Staff have involved outside agencies to support this work where appropriate. Risk assessments are in place for young people which identify their vulnerability and any risks they may pose to others. Activity based risk assessments are also in place.

Staff enjoy positive relationships with young people based upon mutual respect. Staff focus on rewarding good behaviour and clear reward systems are in place. Young people have been able to save up reward money to buy large purchases such as a play station. Young people feel that behaviour management has improved in the past six months making the home a more pleasant place to live. The home is working towards developing a unit based on therapeutic principles of working with young people to manage behaviour. Young people emphasise a reduction in sanctions, but say that this has improved behaviour management in the unit as it is a reflection in a change of approach by the manager and staff. Young people report that staff are strict but fair and give them a chance to put their side of the story. No restraints have taken place in the past five months. Staff have had training in control and restraint and are clear as to the circumstances in which it is appropriate to be used.

The home is able to demonstrate that complaints are effectively responded to, investigated and managed. Young people know how to complain and have confidence in the ability of staff to respond to any issues of concern which they may raise. Any issues of bullying are well managed and young people report that there are no concerns in this area. Young people who go missing are notified to the appropriate agencies in line with local guidelines.

Young people are safeguarded from unsuitable people gaining employment in the home through robust vetting practices. No staff are employed until checks on their suitability are completed. Management ensure that regular checks on the building take place to ensure a safe living and working environment. Fire precautionary arrangements in the home ensure young people and staff are safeguarded from fire in line with current good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Following an assessment of need staff draw up a care plan which examines all areas of strength and need. Issues of cultural diversity, disability, and offending history are examined and ways of supporting the young people identified. The staff team is mixed reflecting the cultural diversity of the young people placed. Young people feel their needs are well met by staff who they have good relationships with. An effective keyworking system is in place but young people

emphasise that they can talk to any staff. The home is working towards a therapeutic model of care and staff training is enabling staff to focus more fully on understanding young people's backgrounds and its impact on areas of their development.

Staff demonstrate a solid commitment to education, all young people are enrolled in some form of educational setting. Reward systems are in place to encourage young people to attend and succeed at school and college. Keyworking sessions also focus on supporting young people in achieving their educational goals. Where there are concerns about education this is fed back to the placing authority. Staff are aware of the educational progress of young people and attend key events such as presentation ceremonies. Any equipment or clothing required is provided, such as a suit for a work placement. Young people talk about how staff help them seek out appropriate college courses which will assist them in pursuing their chosen career paths.

Young people enjoy a variety of leisure opportunities although they do not always choose to take up the breadth offered, such as recently offered theatre and concert events. Young people, however, enjoy attending the gym, playing table tennis and playing football regularly. Trips such as ice skating and go-karting have been enjoyed. Young people say that staff are doing lots of things with them and they get time to spend interacting with staff. Young people are enjoying planning a holiday for the summer.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Admissions to the home are in the main planned. Good systems are in place to identify young people's needs and whether the home is able to meet them. The manager ensures that a copy of the central core assessment of need compiled by the placing authority is in place prior to a placement being accepted. This is supplemented by the home's referral and assessment process. A placement planning meeting is held where possible prior to or at the point of placement. A care plan is developed from the assessment information and young people are monitored over the first week of placement. The care plan is kept under review through the statutory reviewing process. Key workers are responsible for updating the care plan on a monthly basis to identify progress and any changes in need. Similarly those young people moving on do so in a planned manner.

Young people are able to maintain contact with their families according to their wishes and any restrictions set by a court. Family members are welcome to visit young people living at the home. In reality young people prefer to visit the family home, many do so every weekend. Young people are able to use the house phone to make calls and are given phone cards to use in public phones.

Young people enjoy positive relationships with staff. Young people report that this is an area which has improved in recent months. Young people say 'staff are listening and interacting more, we have fun and laugh a lot'... 'Staff are good at everything. There is nothing they could do better. The staff have helped me through all my ups and downs that's why I think they do everything to the best of their ability.'

Young people say they find management and staff open and approachable and can talk to them about anything. From discussions with young people and observation during the inspection it was apparent that staff and young people have developed genuine caring relationships.

Laughter was regularly heard in the house throughout the inspection. Staff consult young people on all aspects of their care through regular young people meetings and keyworking discussions. Young people are also encouraged to attend all their statutory reviews.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy a clean, spacious, well maintained and decorated home and are proud of the house they live in. Each young person has their own lockable bedroom, which they are able to personalise. The organisation's school no longer has the use of a classroom in the home. The kitchen/diner and classroom areas have been opened out and refitted giving a spacious family room and chill out areas. This area has become the hub of activity in the home. Young people have been consulted about recent decorative changes and further pictures have been placed about the home to reflect the diversity of the young people. Accommodation is set out over three floors. Sufficient bathrooms and toilets are provided to meet the young people's needs and ensure privacy.

Staff work with young people to develop independence and self-care skills from the time they are admitted to the home. Young people are encouraged to cook, keep their rooms tidy and do their own laundry. As young people approach 16 a life skills plan is drawn up to support any pathway plan the placing authority has developed. The life skills plan covers key areas, such as, household management interpersonal skills, identity, emotional and sexual health, activities, money, self-care, resolving conflict and making choices. Young people feel they are well supported in moving through this process and key equipment such as a fridge is provided for their personal use. Young people are encouraged to save money into an account each week which is supplemented by the organisation. Young people are able to move onto the organisation's semi-independence unit if they wish to.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The staff team is diverse and reflective of the children in the home. Young people individual needs are met. Staff provide positive role models of both genders from a range of backgrounds.

The previous Registered Manager left the home in May. A new manager is now in post and has been working at the home for some months. The manager advises that an application for registration has been submitted to Ofsted.

Clear information is available to young people and placing authorities as to the services the home is able to offer and the house rules. A copy is provided to each child on admission. The children's guide is also available on DVD.

Staffing levels are satisfactory with a minimum of two staff on duty during quiet periods. Staffing is arranged flexibly to respond to times of high demand to meet the needs of the young people. Staff feel they work well as a team and are well supported through regular supervision and staff meetings. Staff say they feel valued by a flexible and supportive management team. Feedback from professionals working with the home highlights good communication and success in enabling young people to achieve certain goals.

Staff benefit from training in key areas such child protection, food hygiene, health and safety, first aid, control and restraint and behaviour management. With a planned change of approach to that of a therapeutic style unit staff are benefitting from monthly training in a therapeutic approach to childcare.

Record keeping in the home does not always fully evidence the care given. For example, shortfalls in the recording of medication, an accident and staff meeting minutes detailing behaviour management, were discussed during the inspection. The manager had identified shortfalls in this area and reminded staff of their responsibilities in relation to record keeping.

The organisation has good systems in place to monitor the quality of care and services provided to children in the home.

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
35	ensure accurate and detailed records are maintained of the care provided to young people in particular in relation to medication and accidents (Regulation 28)	2 August 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.