

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	9 December 2009
Inspector	Paula Eaton
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	19 March 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 children's home accommodates up to five young people between the ages of 10 and 17. The home is owned and managed by a local authority. Features include a garden which backs on to woodland, an activities room, a lounge with an open fire place and single bedrooms. There are office spaces and a separate kitchen and dining area on the ground floor as well as a laundry room.

At the time of the inspection there were four young people living in the home. Only one of the young people was at home during the inspection and this young person was not spoken to.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection that looked at all of the key national minimum standards. Staff build positive relationships with young people and strive to meet their individual needs. The care practice is of a good standard and consistent; records are detailed, kept up to date and generally maintained to a high standard.

Difficult behaviour is responded to constructively, however records relating to physical restraint do not always contain enough detail. Although a good training programme is in place staff who prepare food would benefit from food hygiene training.

Young people benefit from a clean, warm and generally safe environment. However, the number of closed internal doors has implications for the safety and supervision of young people.

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 an action was set requesting that replacement windows were fitted on the first floor. This action was complied with shortly after the inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from a nutritious and varied diet. Staff prepare meals with and for young people and take into account special dietary needs and the likes and dislikes of young people. Staff monitor the diets of young people closely and work with them to encourage healthy eating patterns seeking the advice of nutritionists for professional guidance when appropriate to meet their needs. Snacks and drinks are available for young people on their return from school and staff also prepare dinner and supper for young people in the evening. Although all support staff are involved in the preparation of food, not all staff have up to date food hygiene certificates.

The health needs of young people are met. The home has established effective links with healthcare professionals and has good systems in place for recording, responding to and monitoring the health needs of young people. Individual health profiles are maintained in young people's case files and include any healthcare appointments and the outcome of these. Staff promote a healthy lifestyle and actively discourage smoking, drug and alcohol misuse. The

home also accesses specialist services such as the children and adolescent mental health service to provide support for young people and guidance for staff when required.

Robust systems are in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication. This includes excellent monitoring systems that reduce the possibility of any errors being made. Staff also monitor the effect of medication on young people and ensure that medication reviews take place where there are concerns that the medication they are taking is having an adverse effect. Consent forms are in place for the administration of medication and any medical treatment. Any homely remedies used for young people are approved by their general practitioner.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The privacy and dignity of young people is respected. Bathrooms and bedrooms have appropriate locks on them and there are areas within the home where young people can meet with visitors in private. There is a clear complaints procedure in place and young people are encouraged to be open and voice any concerns that they have. There are very low numbers of complaints in the home.

Good systems are in place for safeguarding young people. All staff receive child protection training as part of their induction and there are clear policies and procedures in place. Records clearly evidence that staff are proactive in ensuring that young people are kept safe and protecting young people is at the forefront of the minds of staff. For example, the handover period between shifts includes discussing any safeguarding concerns involving individual young people. Bullying is not tolerated and relationships between young people are closely monitored. Good systems are in place for responding to occasions where young people abscond and levels of absconding within the home are low.

Staff build positive relationships with young people, there are clear boundaries in place and staff encourage young people to treat each other respectfully. Unacceptable behaviour is responded to appropriately and fairly and staff reflect on their responses to difficult behaviour which enables them to develop and improve strategies as the needs of young people change. Staff also benefit from a debriefing session on shift that allows them to discuss how they are feeling before going home which is especially beneficial if it has been a difficult shift. Records are maintained for any sanctions imposed and any physical restraint used. However, although detailed incident records are maintained in the individual young people's files the restraint record does not always clearly state why it was necessary to use physically restrain a young person. This had already been noted by the Registered Manager and was being addressed.

Systems for ensuring the health and safety of young people and staff are sound. All the required fire safety checks take place at regular intervals and fire drills occur on a monthly basis. Any health and safety issues are promptly reported and addressed.

There are robust recruitment policies and procedures in place to ensure the protection of young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff strive to meet the individual needs of young people and take into account their likes, dislikes and preferences when planning shifts and activities. Each young person has a key worker who supports them. Individual risk assessments are completed for each young person for any identified risk and these are reviewed on a monthly basis to ensure they are kept up to date. Shifts are planned with the individual needs of each young person in mind and cultural and religious needs are considered.

Young people benefit from a high level of support to meet their educational needs. They are supported to maintain school and college placements and staff advocate on their behalf when communicating with schools about any difficulties they are facing. Staff support young people with their homework and encourage daily routines that are structured to include time for study. At the time of the inspection all of the young people in the home had educational placements and good attendance.

Young people are encouraged and supported to pursue their leisure interests. For example, one young person is supported to go fishing, another is supported to attend a football club and another has recently been introduced to a drama club. Group activities also take place in the community and there are in house activities such as a games console, computers books and games available for young people. The garden also has a basket ball hoop and a trampoline for the use of young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Comprehensive assessments are carried out prior to a young person being admitted to the home. A detailed care plan is then developed clearly outlining the young person's needs and the action staff should take to meet these. It is clear that the care plans developed are working documents that are regularly updated to reflect the changing needs and priorities of young people. Statutory reviews take place for young people as required and staff support young people to contribute to these meetings. Detailed reports are written following review meetings and these are kept on individual case files.

Staff ensure that young people maintain contact with their families and encourage them to form and maintain friendships. For example, young people are supported to visit friends at their homes and staff facilitate contact with family members. Contact arrangements are included in individual case files and any restrictions are made clear. Young people have a telephone they can use for maintaining contact with family and friends.

Young people are consulted with in a variety of ways. Young people's meetings take place on a regular basis and young people have one to one meetings with their key worker. The home provides a safe and secure environment to enable young people to openly express their views and young people have access to outside agencies that they can contact for advice and support.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is located in a fairly rural area close to a small town. There are local shops nearby. Young people benefit from a clean, warm and bright environment. The furnishings are homely and of a good quality and provide a comfortable living space for young people.

Young people benefit from an environment that is maintained to a good standard. Good systems are in place for responding to any maintenance issues. Supervision of young people is impeded by a number of internal fire doors in communal areas that are kept shut. Young people and staff can feel and become vulnerable when doors are closed in these areas especially if young people display challenging behaviour.

Young people are accommodated in single bedrooms. They have sufficient furniture and are able to personalise their rooms. One young person has been encouraged to display his art work in his room. There are ample communal spaces for the use of young people and a large outdoor space for young people to explore and use to participate in outdoor activities.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a clear Statement of Purpose that contains all of the required information. It is kept up to date. The young person's guide for the home is in the process of being updated.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff strive to meet the individual needs of young people. This includes meeting their cultural and religious needs. Staff also consider the preferences and views of young people and do not make assumptions based on background information they may have about young people.

There is a stable staff team in place who are knowledgeable, experienced and committed to meeting the needs of the young people they care for. Every effort is made to ensure consistency is maintained with regard to the care for young people. There is an excellent system in place for handing over between shifts that is used to discuss the immediate needs of each individual young person, their whereabouts and plans for the shift ahead. A shift leader takes responsibility for each shift and there are clear lines of accountability within the home. Staffing levels are good and take account of the individual needs of young people and the group as a whole. Absences are generally covered by agency staff who are familiar with the home. Staff have access to a wide range of training courses and are encouraged to attend training.

Robust monitoring systems are in place. The Registered Manager monitors records and regulation 33 visits take place on a monthly basis as required. A local councillor also visits the home and talks to staff and young people on a regular basis.

Young people's statutory files are well maintained and accessible. Young people's confidential files are stored securely.

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
23	minimise the potential risks posed by the restriction of having communal doors closed in the home (Regulation 23(c))	12 February 2010

22	ensure that the record for physical restraint contains sufficient detail to clearly indicate the reason why it was necessary to restrain the young person (Regulation 17(4)(b))	8 January 2010
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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):

- consider providing food hygiene training for all staff involved in the preparation of food (NMS 10)