

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
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Date of last inspection	20 October 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 is a local authority run children's home. It is a detached single storey building situated in a residential area. Staff provide care for young people who are vulnerable and for different reasons unable to live with their families. The home accommodates up to eight young people aged from 10 to 17 years old.

Young people have individual bedrooms with en-suite shower rooms. The home has a lounge, kitchen with dining area, quiet or computer room, bathroom and a laundry. The garden is enclosed and has a lawn and patio area. The home is situated within easy access to the local community, public transport and leisure facilities.

Summary

Young people are well cared for at this home. They are satisfied with the way staff look after their welfare and their health care needs. There is an emphasis on encouraging the young people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

The staff work as a team to ensure the safety of the young people. All staff have been trained in child protection and they demonstrate a professional approach to their work. Young people feel safe living at this home. There are sound recruitment procedures in place to ensure that only suitable staff are appointed to work with the young people.

The education of young people is positively supported at the home. However, the input from schools when young people are excluded is limited. A member of staff has been appointed as an education champion to represent the interests of young people with the schools.

Equality and diversity is a positive feature at the home and young people are encouraged to celebrate religious and cultural differences.

The home is currently being managed by the deputy manager, due to the temporary re-location of the Registered Manager to another children's home covering for sickness absence. The temporary management arrangements continue to support young people's placements well.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no recommendations made at the last interim inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home has a policy for encouraging the young people to eat healthy meals and most of the vegetables provided are grown by the young people in their vegetable garden. This project has proved a success. All special dietary needs are fully met. The staff ensure that separate cooking utensils are used to prepare Halal meals for young people from the Muslim faith. Themed meals representing different cultures are popular among the young people. This demonstrates a positive approach to equality and diversity. Mealtimes are regarded as social occasions when

staff and young people eat together, especially for the evening meal. Fruit is readily available at all times as part of the healthy eating theme practiced at the home. These activities support and encourage young people to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

The health care needs of the young people are recorded in their individual files. This information is used by staff to ensure that appropriate resources are accessed as required. The looked after nurse is a regular visitor to the home. Young people are provided with advice and support in relation to health issues by the nurse. These range from substance misuse, sexual health and personal care. Access to the child and adolescence mental health service (CAMHS) is organised by the looked after nurse as required. All the young people are registered with a doctor and dentist. The arrangements for administering medication to the young people is good. A secure medicines cabinet is located in the office, with access restricted to those staff who have been trained in medicines administration. First aid cover is available at all times. These measures promote the health and well-being of the young people.

The emphasis on healthy meals and the health care support available, positively assists in promoting the health of the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The young people enjoy single bedroom accommodation with their own en-suite facilities. They are therefore, able to enjoy private time alone in their rooms or make use of the contact room to meet their family in private. Staff have a clear understanding of the rights of the young people to have their privacy respected.

Young people are aware of how to make a complaint if they are unhappy with a situation in the home. Support for those who wish to use the formal procedure can be provided by the children's rights service. The young people however, are confident in approaching any member of staff if they have any concerns. The restorative justice approach practiced at the home, involving discussion among young people and staff is the preferred means of resolving issues.

Safeguarding the welfare of young people is taken seriously by staff and all have received mandatory training in child protection awareness. The level of understanding among staff about their safeguarding responsibilities is high. Young people said that they felt safe living at the home and they trusted staff to keep them safe.

The young people confirm that bullying is not an issue. Staff are alert to the fact that this can occur and they manage these situations using restorative justice. This involves the perpetrator and victim discussing the situation and arriving at a solution. The bully is made to face up to the consequences of their actions. All incidents of bullying are communicated among staff to ensure that close monitoring takes place. This is good practice and protects young people.

Incidents of young people going absent without authority are not currently an issue at the home. There are procedures to manage these situations and a protocol is in place with the local police. The most common situation involves young people not returning to the home at an agreed time and the procedures are invoked as a consequence. Staff ensure that the young person is treated with sensitivity and reasons for the absence is ascertained. It is standard procedure to ask the young person if they wish to speak to someone independent of the home. This is good practice.

Although all staff are trained in behaviour management techniques, physical restraint is not a common feature of this home. Staff use dialogue and discussion to maintain a calm environment. Young people said that, 'staff are ok and they really do care about us.' The de-escalation of tense situations is the preferred practice among staff. It is commendable that some staff state that they have not had to use any restraint in the time they have been employed at the home. This approach encourages a more positive relationship between the staff and young people.

The building is well-maintained and all safety checks have been completed in respect of fire safety, domestic appliances and the gas systems. There are secure locks on the entrance doors and all windows have restricted opening. The safety of the young people is further enhanced through the robust recruitment procedures. All new staff are cleared by the Criminal Records Bureau before commencing their duties. These measures promote the safety of young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The young people are positively supported by staff at the home. Each young person, is allocated a key worker, who is responsible for coordinating resources and support systems. The key workers and young people meet regularly to review progress against the care plan and any other issues as necessary. One young person said, 'my key worker is cool I can talk about any problem with her.' The children's rights service is available for advice and guidance on any issues of concern. In addition, the looked after nurse who is a regular visitor to the home, ensures that any appropriate health care resources are provided.

Education is afforded a high priority. The recent appointment of a member of staff as an education champion has raised the profile of education being an important element in the care provided at the home. Staff provide positive support to young people who are excluded from school by monitoring work set during school time. However, the work sent by schools is often limited. Staff therefore; work with young people to occupy their time productively during the school day. A homework club is established at the home to support young people with extra tuition out of school time. Personal education plans (PEP) are up-to-date and located in case files. The support of the education looked after team (ELAC) is positive and a teacher can be provided to help out with some elements of school work. This is very good practice and promotes the education of the young people.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The care plans located in case files set out clearly the assessed needs of the young people. These records are monitored by key workers who are responsible for ensuring that the requirements of the plan are implemented in their day-to-day work with young people. Where English is not their first language, interpreters are used. This is a good demonstration of equality and diversity. Reviews of the care plan take place involving the young people who are able to make their own contribution using the 'It's My Review About Me' document. This is appropriately designed to meet the needs of young people and encourages their involvement in the review process.

The home encourages young people where possible, to maintain close contact with their families. This is seen as an essential part of the care process and young people are given an allowance

towards their mobile phones for this purpose. This includes an international phone card for those young people whose families are living in another country.

Young people are expected to be involved in plans when they initially move into the home. This is done at a gradual pace to enable them to come to terms with the change in their personal situation. There are occasions when emergency admissions take place and staff are clearly aware of the need to work with the young person concerned in a sensitive way. They are encouraged to bring with them personal possessions and have a say in how their bedroom is to be decorated. When young people are planning to leave the home, the key worker is responsible for ensuring their full involvement throughout the process. Staff always plan a celebratory event when a young person leaves the home.

The opinions and views of the young people are encouraged through house meetings, key worker sessions and in day-to-day interactions with staff. Young people said that house meetings are, 'good and let us all come together to talk about anything we like with staff.' It is evident that young people are able to participate positively in the life of the home and this encourages them to take a sense of ownership in respect of the decisions made.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The key workers play an important role during the leaving care process. Young people are fully involved throughout and are consulted about their leaving care plan. This is a sensitive time as the young person plans for their independence and support from staff is important. Young people are taught about budgeting, paying bills and domestic skills. To assist this process, an allowance is paid to young people to budget and to purchase food. These measures support young people to prepare for independence.

The home is a modern well-maintained building that provides young people with a clean comfortable place to live. All young people have single bedrooms with good quality en-suite facilities. This enhances the privacy of young people. A comfortable appropriately furnished lounge offers a place to relax and socialise. A room known as the quiet room is equipped with computers for young people to use. The large secluded garden to the rear of the home has a table, chairs and sun shade. Although registered for eight beds, the home now only offers accommodation for six young people. Two rooms are used for other purposes.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home encourages young people to appreciate other cultures. This is mainly through discussion and by having specially prepared themed meals to celebrate particular cultures. The theme of Africa is being planned due to the pending world cup football tournament. Young people along with staff plan to prepare meals that represent countries who play on particular days. The young people are actively encouraged by staff to appreciate different cultures and religions. Any specific religious or cultural diets are met. As a mark of respect for those young people, only particular cooking utensils are used for these meal preparations. Any racist comments are dealt with by staff through the restorative justice approach involving young people discussing such incidents.

The Statement of Purpose indicates the services to be provided for young people who live at the home. The registration is for eight young people. However, only six places are available due to use made of two bedrooms for other purposes. The manager intends to apply to Ofsted for a minor variation to reflect the current usage.

The Registered Manager is currently providing cover for another children's home as a temporary arrangement. The deputy manager therefore, is currently responsible for day-to-day operations. The Registered Manager visits the home regularly to monitor activities and to provide professional supervision for senior staff.

There is a positive team approach among the staff who are well trained and demonstrate competence in carrying out their duties. The home exceeds the national minimum standards in numbers of staff qualified to National Vocational Qualification at Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People. This is commendable. Young people commented, 'staff are cool and good at their jobs.' The numbers of staff on duty each shift are sufficient to ensure safe management of the home. Where required, the numbers would be increased to meet particular needs of the young people. This promotes their safety and well-being.

Records are located in the office and these are clearly marked. The case files contain relevant information about each young person. These records are checked monthly by a manager to monitor accuracy and progress being made against each young person's care plan. Some young people however, are not aware that they can see their records.

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
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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):

- ensure children are made aware that they may read their files, confidential or third party information excepted, and are actively encouraged to do so and to correct errors and add personal statements. (NMS 35.2)