

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Michael McCleave
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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 can accommodate 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. There is also a self-contained annex to the home with two bedrooms and a kitchen. 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

At this unannounced inspection all key standards were inspected.

This is a good service with some satisfactory features. The home actively promotes equality and diversity through celebrating the cultural diversity among the young people. Themed meals are popular representing the different cultures of the local community and within the home.

Young people live in a safe environment, and they are cared for by staff who demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding their welfare. Additionally, there is a positive approach taken by staff, to promoting the health of the young people. This is through encouraging healthy eating and access to appropriate health care resources as required.

Young people are supported by key workers who ensure that when they leave the home, they are prepared as far as possible to take responsibility for their independence. However, there is a lack of positive input from the education support services for those young people not in full time education. This means that their educational needs are not fully met.

Monitoring systems to indicate when checks are due on domestic appliances, are not very robust .

The overall organisation of the home is sound, and staff work well as a team for the benefit of the 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

The manager was asked to review the measures used to control difficult behaviour among the young people, ensure that Ofsted was notified of serious incidents, improve the furnishings in the building and to update the Statement of Purpose to meet the Regulations. In addition the manager was recommended to ensure that locks on bathroom doors were suitable, and to improve the way fire records were completed.

The manager has taken steps to comply with all the actions and recommendations made.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

There is a positive approach at the home to ensure the good health of the young people. Meals are well thought out with the cooperation of the young people, and there is a strong emphasis on healthy diets. Compromises are made with the young people, to ensure that the occasional takeaway meal is more than balanced by nutritionally balanced diets at most meal times taken in the home. There is good use made of the vegetable garden, which grows a variety of vegetables that are used to supplement meals. The young people enjoy a range of meals, which includes experiencing meals representing the different cultures at the home. These include Afghanistan, African, Caribbean and European. Staff and young people regularly organise themed meal nights when a particular ethnic dish is prepared. This is very popular and encourages the young people to have a greater awareness of different cultures. Any special diets based on health or religious requirements are fully met. Arrangements are made to ensure that young people are not denied specialist food on grounds of religion or culture. This promotes a good understanding at the home in respect of equality and diversity.

The health care needs of the young people are appropriately managed, and good links having been established with the various health support agencies. Health information on each young person is clear and the Looked After Children's Nurse provides the young people with health assessments, advice and guidance on personal health. Support is available from the nurse for staff to access any health resources required. All the young people are registered with a local GP and with a dental service. Within the home, medicines are kept in a secure cabinet, and records are maintained for all medicines that are administered to the young people. Some signatures are however, not clear in identifying who made the entry. Where required, other health support services are made available, including Child Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) and the drugs advisory service. These resources ensure that the young people have their health needs appropriately met.

The home positively encourages the young people to be health conscious and will pay for activities that enhance this. These include, swimming, membership of the local gym, football, ice skating, cricket lessons and horse riding. This is good practice and encourages a healthy lifestyle among the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff are aware that they must ensure the privacy of the young people is respected. For example, it is normal practice for staff to knock on bedroom doors before entering. All young people have their own keys to their bedrooms. Young people have access to a quiet area to make private telephone calls. All bathrooms and toilets have good quality locks fitted. Confidential information is stored in the office under secure conditions to ensure confidentiality. This ensures that young people are protected from unauthorised persons having access to their personal details.

There is a complaints procedure in place, and a complaints form is available for the young people to use. This is designed so that children and young people can understand how to make a complaint. They are able to contact someone from outside of the home if they have any

concerns, and this information is included in the Welcome Pack given to all young people when they move into this home.

The staff have a good understanding of child protection, and know their responsibilities to safeguard young people. The Local Safeguarding Children's Board procedures are available, and all staff have had training in child protection awareness. However, some staff have not had up dated refresher training. There is a whistle blowing policy in place, which provides staff with guidance on reporting concerns.

Young people said they 'feel safe in the home' and confirmed that bullying is not currently an issue. The home has an anti bullying policy and staff are aware of this, and any bullying is dealt with promptly. This approach helps to keep the young people safe.

There are procedures in place if a young person goes missing without consent. However, some young people are absenting themselves on a regular basis, and this calls into question the relevance of the placement.

Although all staff have received formal training in behaviour management, including restraint, staff base their management of behaviour on de-escalation techniques and low level restraint holds if it is necessary. Young people feel that staff are fair in the way they treat them.

The home provides a safe environment for the young people to live in. The maintenance of electrical installations, fire alarm system, portable appliances testing take place annually. However, one appliance that was stored in the loft had not been checked. Fire drills are held including full evacuation of the home and staff have attended training in fire safety awareness. The last full evacuation took place in January 2009, although a demonstration evacuation was shown to young people who had recently been admitted to the home. Risk assessments are appropriately completed for activities undertaken by the young people and also for the building and grounds. These are intended to keep young people safe and to minimise risk to their well being.

The home operates the council's recruitment and selection policy, whereby all applicants for employment are required to have full clearances, including an up to date Criminal Records Bureau check. No one is permitted to work at the home until all checks are completed. There is a positive approach taken by the authority in terms of equality and diversity, and a children's panel coordinated by the children's rights service, forms an important part of the selection process for new staff. This promotes the involvement of young people in key decisions about who will work at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The home operates a key worker system, and support for the young people is coordinated by the key worker. There are young people from diverse cultural backgrounds living at the home, and staff have ensured appropriate support is available for the young people from their local ethnic communities. This is very good practice and indicates a positive approach to equality and diversity. Young people feel well supported, and are confident that they can approach any member of staff to discuss concerns they may have.

Staff are positive in their approach to the value of education for the young people. However, resources are an issue when young people are refusing to attend school. The support from the education system, is not always forthcoming in providing the young people with a structured form of education during the school day. There is the additional issue over schools not providing the home with a Personal Education Plan (PEP) for some young people. This can have a negative impact on the ability of young people to benefit from, and achieve their potential educationally.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

All young people are subject to an Impact Assessment when they are initially admitted to the home. This key assessment, forms the basis of the work which the staff will undertake with the young person. All plans are reviewed independently by a reviewing officer of the local authority. The systems in place ensure that all reviews are carried within statutory timescales.

Where relevant, young people are supported to maintain contact with their families. A payphone is available to facilitate calls in private, and a mobile phone allowance is given to the young people to enable them to contact friends. These measures ensure that these important links are maintained.

Planned admissions to the home, are carried out in a way that supports the young people in a sensitive manner. Staff ensure that the cultural background of the young person is known, in order that they can make appropriate arrangements for special cultural or religious needs, and where necessary, set up support links with the local community. This demonstrates a very good awareness of equality and diversity considerations.

Young people are encouraged to make a contribution to the life of the home. This is mainly through young people meetings where activities are planned. Areas of discussion include, food preferences and menus, trips out to places of interest, holidays, and any other issue that need to be raised with staff. The home will provide interpreters for young people who have difficulty in communicating. This is good practice.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are involved in all stages of planning when preparing to leave the home. Staff are aware that this can be a sensitive and stressful time for young people. The pathway plan is completed with the young person, and ensures that they are given the most appropriate support as they move towards independence. Staff are aware of the importance of young people understanding what support mechanisms are to be put into place. Some of this support, extends to staff maintaining time limited contact with the young person who has moved out of the home. This is good practice and ensures they are able to receive advice and guidance from a trusted adult.

The home is a modern well furnished building that provides the young people with a safe place to live. The building is comfortably furnished throughout, and the young people enjoy single bedrooms that have en-suite facilities. Young people like their accommodation and some commented "I love my room because I have never had a place of my own, it is fantastic". A pay phone is available for telephone calls to be made in private. The kitchen dining room is spacious and brightly decorated. A large map of the world is located on a wall. This is used to indicate

where young people originate from, and to identify countries when themed meals are held at the home. This demonstrates a good approach to promoting a better awareness of equality and diversity among the young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good.

Staff have a clear understanding of the equality and diversity issues that may require consideration, to ensure young people from minority or diverse backgrounds are treated fairly and with respect. All the young people are able to enjoy meals representing different cultures, during themed meal nights held at the home. Staff have developed good contacts with members of the various ethnic minority communities, and use these contacts to support the young people. The manager is a member of a working group that has produced an informative booklet known as 'Guidance For Carers of Muslim Children'. The local authority provides training in equality and diversity, and this is mandatory for all staff. Young people from different cultural backgrounds feel that they are respected at the home. These positive steps promote the well being of the young people and encourage racial harmony.

The Statement of Purpose is clear about setting out what care the home can provide. Included in the document are details of outside contacts and those of Ofsted. It is presented in a form that can be understood by families and placing authorities. The young people's 'Welcome Pack' contains a user-friendly booklet about the home. This document is being revised and is designed in a colourful style with information about the home. However, it does not inform the young people about the complaints procedure, or have details about how Ofsted can be contacted.

The staff at the home are supervised by the manager, who is responsible for day-to-day operations and is supported by two deputies. The staff team work well together. This is a competent staff group who have a range of experiences. Over 80% of the staff are qualified at National Vocational Qualification level 3 in 'The Care of Children and Young People'. This reflects the support of management to staff development. All remaining staff are either enrolled on or are in the process of completing the training.

The number of staff on duty, is sufficient to meet the care needs of the young people and to support them in their daily activities. The young people are positive about the staff who look after them, and the gender mix is balanced. This promotes the safety and good care of the young people.

There is a training programme in place for all staff, which includes mandatory training in key areas, such as child protection, safety, medicines, equality and diversity and behaviour management. All new staff undergo compulsory induction training. Every member of staff has a personal development plan. This clearly indicates the training they have completed and any planned training to improve professional skills. However, some staff have not had up dated refresher training in child protection.

Quality assurance monitoring at the home, is carried out by an independent officer of the authority through regulatory monthly monitoring visits to the home. The report prepared, will indicate if any actions are required to maintain appropriate standards. Additionally, the manager meets with the deputies every four weeks to review operations at the home.

The young people's case records are kept in secure conditions in the office. The information is readily accessed, and the authority has a system which enables any manager to monitor the quality of work from this system. It is local authority policy that young people can see their files, and this is made clear when they move into the home.

The overall organisation at the home is good and staff are positively motivated in their work on behalf of the young people.

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 that the revised Children's Guide contains information on how a child can contact Ofsted (NMS1.3)
- ensure that each child's file contains a copy of their Personal Education Plan (PEP) setting out a record of their educational achievements, needs and aspirations (NMS 14.2)
- ensure for children of compulsory school age who are not in school, there is an educational programme in place for young people during normal school hours. (NMS 14.7)