

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24 August 2009
Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	12 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

The home provides care and accommodation for three young people of either gender who are aged between 11 and 17 years. The home is a three storey semi-detached house situated in a community that provides access to public transport and amenities such as sports and leisure facilities.

Summary

The purpose of this visit was to undertake an unannounced key inspection. Six outcomes were inspected on this occasion; Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation.

The home provides a good standard of care for young people. The current staff group is well established and experienced with a good balance of gender and ethnicity. Staff are supported by clear policies and procedures, supervision and relevant training. Staff are consistent in their approach to young people and behaviour is managed at the lowest level.

Three recommendations were made following this inspection, however, there is generally good management oversight into how the home is running and quality assurance systems in place to monitor and improve the quality of care that young people receive.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No actions or recommendations were made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with the opportunity to eat healthily. Fresh fruit and vegetables are supplied and the menu planner shows that a balanced diet is offered, although records do not show what has actually been eaten. One young person confirmed that staff encourage them to choose healthy food as part of their training for independence.

All young people are registered with primary health care services and routine appointments are made when necessary with medical and dental practitioners, including preventative health measures and advice. Each young person has a comprehensive health plan and the home has good links with external professionals to access consultation and individual counselling services for young people.

For example, there are regular visits from the Looked After Children's nurse and records evidence discussions about personal hygiene and immunisation. Young people are actively discouraged from smoking, drinking alcohol and taking illegal substances and are given opportunities to discuss these issues openly with their key workers.

No one at the home is currently prescribed medication, however, there are procedures in place for any medication to be safely stored and administered should the need arise.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and information kept about them is protected and shared only on a 'need to know' basis. Personal records and other documentation is kept in secure, locked cabinets and any electronic information is password protected.

The home is managed well and is run on the premise that young people are young adults who deserve to be treated and respected accordingly. This means that there is little need to implement procedures around bullying, absconding and statutory safeguarding, as these are not issues for concern with the present group of young people. Similarly, restraint is rarely used as differences and 'moans and groans' are resolved through discussion and negotiation. A complaints procedure and other policies are in place, which underpins this good practice and provides staff with clear guidance.

Young people live in a home that provides safety and security. Individual and environmental risk assessments address any potential risks to young people both in the home and in the community. These are reviewed and updated regularly. Fire records demonstrate that drills and routine checks on equipment are conducted however, no fire drills have been carried out during the night as recommended by the National Minimum Standards.

Only one new member of staff has been appointed to the home since the last inspection, and assessment of personnel files demonstrates that careful selection and vetting of staff has been undertaken.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit by being offered care that is tailored to their particular needs. Each young person receives effective personal, social and emotional support and guidance that meets his or her individual and diverse needs and requirements. Young people are offered the opportunity to be involved in the assessment and care planning process and to have a say about what they think they need to make good progress.

Through regular key working sessions and more informal means, young people are enabled to develop self-esteem and be equipped with the social skills they need to improve their life chances. Young people trust staff and feel confident in initiating conversations about specific issues.

In line with good parenting, there is close monitoring of the progress of young people. This enables them to feel valued and to develop a sense of belonging. This is evident by the fact that young people choose not to abscond from the home, and placements are stable.

Young people's education is promoted as valuable in itself and as part of preparation for adulthood. Staff support young people with any arrangements for accessing educational provision that is most appropriate to their needs. Where required, personal education plans are completed, and young people are encouraged to seek work or apply to college to increase their employment prospects.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs assessed and are placed in the home appropriately. There is careful, individualised care planning which fully takes into account young people's views and opinions. Statutory and informal reviews take place regularly and young people are encouraged by staff to contribute as fully as possible to this process and communicate their views.

Consultation with young people is a strength of the home. There is frequent dialogue with young people and they are empowered, as far as possible, to consider their circumstances, behaviours, relationships and interactions. Young people are provided with forums such as young people's meetings and key working sessions to discuss any views they may have. Staff in the home strive to create an inclusive, reflective and participatory environment that encourages consultation and discussion.

Young people are enabled to maintain valued relationships with family and friends. Contact is encouraged and planned for and young people are guided by staff whom they trust to support them with the practicalities of visiting arrangements.

There have been no new admissions to or discharges from the home for some time. Procedures are in place, however, to deal with such events in a planned, sensitive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are helped to prepare for adulthood and independence in line with their individual pathway and care plans as required. These identify how young people are to receive practical help and guidance to enable them to make a successful transition into independence. The daily routine of the home provides opportunities for young people to develop knowledge and skills needed for future independent living.

The home is clean and tidy. Generally repairs are promptly dealt with and maintenance good. Young people enjoy homely accommodation and the home is equipped with age appropriate facilities that young people can enjoy in their spare time including a pool table and access to a computer.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people live in a home that is well managed. The manager ensures that staff are properly trained for the job they do and new staff receive induction training to prepare them for their role. Regular supervision and team meetings also provide an important means of support for staff and an opportunity to develop and share good practice.

The staff team is well-established which provides security and stability for young people. Young people are kept safe by appropriate staffing levels, although on the day of inspection, this was compromised by the employment of an individual who did not meet the age criteria for working in a children's home. This was immediately responded to on the day of inspection.

However, staffing levels are such that there is a member of staff available for young people to turn to for help, guidance and advice and staff and management are visible in the home. Any staffing shortfalls are immediately covered by the use of bank staff who is familiar to young people, which helps to provide continuity of care.

There is good information in the statement of purpose for young people and their families, guiding them through the services they can expect from the home. This also gives information about the staffing structure and includes a statement about how the home operates.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive a service designed to meet their diverse needs, as is evidenced by the detailed level of care planning and response to individual need. Young people are provided with good role models for diversity as they are looked after by a team that is balanced in terms of age, ethnicity and gender.

Effective self-evaluation is undertaken to assess the quality of care and performance of the service. This provides an on-going assessment of the quality of care provided for young people, and identifies areas of weaknesses and outlines action for improvement or adjustment in the interest of young people.

Good systems are in place to monitor the daily lives of young people living in the home. Young people's files and other documentation is well maintained and organised and kept securely in the staff office. This ensures that young people have a permanent and secure record of their history.

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):

- record menus (as served) to demonstrate provision of a suitable and varied diet (NMS 10.4)
- undertake at least one fire drill, including evacuation of staff and children at night (NMS 26.8)
- ensure that no person works in a children's home unless they are four years older than the oldest child accommodated (NMS 29.4)