

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC362965
Inspection date	14 May 2009
Inspector	Sophie Jane Barton
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	11 December 2008
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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 home is a single placement children's home run for children and young people aged between nine and 18 years. It is one of several children's homes owned by a national child care agency. It is situated in a residential area close to a seaside town. Placements at the home are for children and young people who have been assessed as needing extra 'time-out' on a structured basis. The home is registered to accommodate children and young people who have emotional and behavioural difficulties and have a history of trauma, abuse or family breakdown. The home provides short to medium term care to allow for the identification of planned placements or to prepare young people for a move to independence. A registered psychotherapist works closely with staff to advise and assist the ongoing assessment programme. A therapeutic environment is tailored to meet the needs of the individual. Young people are enabled to access a wide range of recreational and cultural activities.

Summary

This unannounced full inspection covered all key national minimum standards. Overall the home provides a good service with some outstanding practice in relation to promoting the welfare, education and health of young people. Young people are helped to stay safe and free from harm and neglect. Young people's health needs improve considerably while living in the home, with staff promoting a healthy lifestyle and staff providing excellent support to young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Young people's strengths and abilities are promoted fully, with sensitive and flexible care being provided to develop self-confidence, self-worth and independence. The home provides strong support with helping young people maintain and develop appropriate contacts with friends and family. Young people benefit from strong leadership and management within the home, as well as high quality care and support from a competent staff team. No shortfalls in meeting regulations or standards were identified during this inspection.

At the time of the inspection one young person was living in the home and was present during the inspection.

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 address one good practice recommendation in relation to ensuring a ratio of 80% of all care staff have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3, or equivalent, in caring for children and young people. This has been met appropriately, with all permanent staff having completed the course or due to complete it shortly.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's health needs are met excellently by the home. The young people's health needs are very well assessed prior to moving into the home, and the staff promptly address any unmet needs, such as enabling young people to receive dental services or input from the designated nurse for looked after children. The organisation itself is committed to improving the health of young people and has a national healthy outcomes group. This group has provided excellent

support with stop smoking guidance, healthy eating, and is currently arranging a sports event for young people to promote the fun of physical exercise.

The staff team work therapeutically with the young people, providing care and support to meet their emotional wellbeing. The home's psychotherapist provides valuable guidance, consultation, training and advice to the staff team on attachment disorder and child development. The manager has an excellent understanding of the emotional and mental health needs of the young people, and how best to promote the young people's recovery from trauma. Young people have a detailed health plan, which guides staff on how to meet their needs. Staff are further provided with excellent guidance from the young people's risk assessments which are very individualised and updated regularly. The staff maintain good quality records of all health appointments attended by young people, and of any accidents or illnesses. Medication systems are very good, with accurate and up to date records kept of medication received into the home.

Young people are fully engaged in planning, shopping for, preparing and cooking their meals. Mealtimes are relaxed and flexible depending on the young people's needs. Meals are varied and staff work imaginatively with young people to engage them in trying new and more nutritious food.

Staff are skilled and trained in meeting the health needs of young people. Staff have attended training in self harm, transactional analysis, attachment theory, eating disorders, and drug and alcohol misuse. All staff are trained in first aid, safe administration of medicines and food hygiene. Staff training is monitored closely to ensure that all staff receive this training within the first six months of employment and that it is refreshed when necessary.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home is excellent at promoting young people's welfare. The manager is very competent and knowledgeable about safe childcare practices and procedures. Staff receive good training in child protection, receiving this promptly during their induction and then a more substantive course within six months. There is an effective complaints policy and parents, professionals and young people know how to complain about the service. Young people's complaints are dealt with effectively and extremely quickly and their rights are promoted and upheld at all times.

Young people are helped to stay safe and free from harm. Risks to young people from absconding, bullying, self-harm or drug and alcohol abuse are very clearly identified and managed to a high standard. Staff have comprehensive guidance to follow, which is individualised to the needs of the young people. Young people are also provided with the necessary care and emotional support as well as the practical support to keep them safe.

Staff manage young people's behaviour excellently. Staff understand the triggers of behaviours and are able to deflect and diffuse aggressive behaviour very well. Outstanding behaviour management plans are in place to support staff with their practice and consistency. These plans cover a range of potentially difficult behaviours displayed by young people, and are based on a very sound theoretical knowledge and understanding of attachment theory. The whole care approach is therapeutic and aims to not only manage the behaviour but also re teach the child more socially acceptable ways of behaving. Young people progress very well while living in the home, with incidents of aggression and absconding reducing considerably. There have been

no incidents involving restraint in the last ten months. The manager and staff reflect on their practice closely and work with the young people to establish appropriate rules and boundaries. Very comprehensive records are maintained of all incidents and these are monitored closely by the manager and external professionals.

Young people enjoy a safe and comfortable environment. There are robust safety checks made of the fire alarm system and equipment. All fire, gas and electrical equipment is maintained to a high standard with very regular servicing. Young people are further protected by very good practice in recruitment. Extensive checks are made of all staff, and interview processes are thorough and examine skills, attitudes and values.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are significantly helped to enjoy and achieve. They are given considerable individual support, which is flexible and tailored to the needs of the young people. The high staffing ratio allows for quality time with young people in and outside of the home. Staff can easily and readily provide transport when needed, and support young people in their chosen leisure and educational activities. Staff focus their time on being with the young people, with designated office duties being separate from their time with the young people. Staff are aware of the young people's right to independent representation and encourage young people to see an advocate or independent visitor.

The staff work very hard to support young people with education. When a young person is not attending school, there are alternative educational activities provided by staff which are imaginative and suitable to the child's needs and abilities. The manager is very proactive and determined to set up the appropriate educational packages for the young people. Staff liaise closely with education representatives and are able to offer support in school and college settings to help the young people stay settled and safe.

Young people are able to pursue a range of interests and hobbies, including going to private singing lessons, the gym and swimming. Staff are again very creative in the activities they encourage young people to do, and young people have grown in confidence from developing skills in a chosen activity, such as photography. Young people have access to a range of books, music, toys and a computer. Friends are encouraged to visit and to have tea, activities and sleepover with the young people. Young people are further enabled to integrate into many community activities. The staff are very good at balancing the rights of the young people to have unsupervised free time with the management of identified risks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are very well placed in the home. There is excellent consideration of the young people's needs prior to them moving into the home. The manager shows strong leadership when assessing referrals and links closely with the home's psychotherapist to ensure the staff team are appropriately skilled to meet the needs of the young people. The manager obtains all necessary referral information and looked after children documentation prior to a young person moving in.

A pre placement plan is developed and shared with the young person and social worker. This enables excellent communication from the start of the placement of how the home will meet the identified day to day needs. Placement plans are very well considered and individualised. The manager ensures these are kept updated following any change in circumstances and are copied to the placing authority and parent if this is appropriate. The manager sends a report each week to the placing authority detailing the progress of the young person. A comprehensive report is also completed for each statutory review, and the young people are fully engaged in the completing of all of the reports. The home addresses any review recommendations immediately.

Young people benefit considerably from the home promoting their contact with friends and family. Staff are very proactive in enabling constructive contact, and work hard to maintain the young people's contact with friends and extended family. Young people enjoy friends and family to visit, which staff encourage as flexibly as possible. Staff are able to provide transport and to supervise contact sessions. Excellent emotional support and understanding is given around contact.

Young people further enjoy very sensitive arrangements for when they move in and leave the home. Young people are enabled to visit the home, area and meet the staff prior to moving in. The manager works closely with social workers and carers to ensure moving in is managed sensitively and at the right pace for the young people. Endings are planned brilliantly, providing young people with excellent emotional and practical support. Staff arrange presents and keepsakes for young people when they leave.

Young people's rights to be involved in all decisions about their lives are promoted at all times. Young people's views are listened to acted upon. The manager is a good advocate for young people promoting their rights to other services. Young people are actively engaged in decisions about the running of the home. They attend team meetings and handover sessions, and are encouraged to complete the home's daily log of events.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people live in a very homely and comfortable environment. The home is decorated and furnished to a high standard. Young people have been involved in choosing pictures and furniture. Young people have a single bedroom which is decorated to their tastes. Young people are able to keep their possessions in their bedroom and in communal areas, and have access to all parts of the home and gardens.

Young people are provided with adequate pocket money and allowances. Older young people are enabled to maintain and budget their own money in preparation for moving to more independent living. The staff are very good at encouraging young people to develop daily living skills and young people can do their own shopping, cooking, laundry and cleaning. The manager liaises closely with leaving care workers and develops an appropriate Pathway Plan for young people. Young people's successful transition to more independent living is further supported by staff enabling young people to develop appropriate relationships with others and to build on their self-esteem.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people benefit from an effective and very well run home. The manager is experienced and competent at managing the home, providing excellent leadership, support and supervision to staff. Team meetings are very productive, guiding staff on providing high quality management and care of the young people and reviewing the home's practices. The assistant manager is also very confident and skilled in deputising in the manager's absence.

Young people are cared for by an appropriately skilled staff team who are able to meet their needs well. The organisation provides a comprehensive rolling programme of training, specific to meeting the needs of children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All staff receive training in child protection, attachment disorders and managing challenging behaviour. Individual staff have attended external specialist training in self-harm. The staff team regularly receive consultations and guidance from professional therapists in managing particular behaviours.

Staff have a strong knowledge of the home's policies and procedures, and the organisation effectively reviews their policies to ensure they keep up to date with good practice. Staff shifts are well managed, with adequate time for handover sessions and completion of records. Young people benefit considerably by the home achieving continuity of staffing as much as possible. The home has very proactively recruited and manages a bank of sessional workers so that agency staff are no longer used to cover staff absences.

There are good systems in place to monitor the home's performance. The manager undertakes comprehensive checks at least monthly on all necessary records and practices. This is coupled with an external professional visiting each month unannounced and inspecting the premises, records and meeting with staff and young people. Any trends, concerns or recommendations following monitoring checks are implemented promptly to maintain good practice.

Children's needs and progress is very well recorded in their individual files. Young people are able to view this comprehensive record. All information required by regulation is appropriately obtained, stored securely and kept accurate and up to date.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home meets the needs of a diverse group of young people, and individual needs are acknowledged and met appropriately. Staff are also recruited from varying racial and cultural backgrounds and there is an even gender mix within the team. Staff have undertaken basic training in equality and diversity and a more comprehensive course is now planned on a rolling programme.

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
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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):