

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC366343
Inspection date	13 August 2009
Inspector	Sue Winson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	27 February 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 home is a large detached property situated in a residential area. The home has five bedrooms and sufficient communal space for the number of young people. The home is situated close to public transport, local schools and amenities.

Summary

This is a good service with some outstanding features. Effective care planning and individual support to young people ensures that their needs are met in a holistic manner. Healthy living is promoted and policies and practices serve to safeguard the young people. Education is promoted and they are well prepared for adult life. Family and friends are welcomed in the home and contact is promoted. Young people are fully involved in decision making and planning and have a voice. The house is furnished in a homely way and kept in good repair. There is effective management and a stable staff group who are committed to achieving positive outcomes for all the young people. Five recommendations have been made to improve the quality and standards of care. Full written information has not yet been gained from placing social workers for all the young people despite the efforts of the managers and staff. Although the managers contact referees prior to employing new staff they do not log that they have verified why previous employment has ended. Staff do not receive formal supervision each month nor have they had appraisals in the last year. The second staff sleep in bed is in a communal area. Recording on young people's files is not always comprehensive or accurate.

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 outstanding.

Young people enjoy healthy and nutritious meals. They are involved in shopping and preparing meals and have reasonable choices about what they eat. They are able to make snacks and drinks. The staff compile menus with the young people and take opportunities to discuss healthy eating and kitchen hygiene. Individual diets are continuously monitored. There is suitable dining space for the number of young people and staff.

Young people's placement plans outline their individual health needs and how they will be met and their good health is promoted. The home has largely gained full health information from placing authorities and where this has not been provided staff are persistent in requesting the written information. Staff work with young people to meet their physical and emotional needs and ensure that they access specialist health services as necessary. They work with health professionals for the benefit of the young people to promote healthy lifestyles. Young people are encouraged to attend check ups and appointments and are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians. Staff have done training in food hygiene, first aid and specific issues in order to meet the health needs of individual young people.

Policies and practices for the administration of medication safeguard the young people. Medicines are safely stored, full records are maintained and stock checks take place. Appropriate permissions for medical treatment and non-prescription medicines are in place. Staff have received training on medication from a local nurse.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and information is confidentially handled. All the young people have keys to their bedrooms and staff knock before entering their rooms. Staff understand the need for young people to spend some time alone. The policies and practices for room searches are appropriate. Young people can make telephone calls in private and there is sufficient space for them to see visitors away from the group. Files are safely stored in the office. Examples were given where only a small number of staff have information about sensitive issues at the request of the young people.

Young people's welfare is promoted. The home's policies and practices in respect of complaints, safeguarding, bullying and missing from home serve to protect the young people. Young people know of a range of people they can complain to and complaints have been dealt with in a timely manner and the complainants informed of progress and outcomes. The home's safeguarding policy has been updated and appropriate actions have been taken to address concerns and safety issues. Social workers, and families where possible, are kept informed of significant events and Ofsted has been notified in line with Regulations. Staff are alert to the potential for bullying and address any issues as they arise.

Young people who are missing from home are protected in accordance with written guidance and are responded to positively on return. Risk assessments are in place which inform staff on when to report a young person missing. Staff know the procedures and attempt to keep in phone contact with the young people when they are missing. Where young people are persistently missing or are missing for a long period of time meetings are held to discuss concerns. It is evident that the staff use a range of strategies to minimise the incidents of missing from home with varying degrees of success. All actions are logged and the manager monitors the records. Young people are seen by the police on their return. Staff take opportunities as they arise to discuss personal safety issues with the young people.

Individual behaviour plans are in place which are monitored and reviewed. There is a reward system which outlines a small number of achievable aims for each young person and which works in practice. The charts are available in their personal files and they can and do check where they are up to. Rules are reasonable and staff discuss strategies to meet individual needs. Positive behaviour management includes praise and encouragement and little use of sanctions, which are fair and reasonable. There have been no incidents of physical intervention. Staff receive training.

A range of generic and individual risk assessments are in place which clearly outline the risks and include action planning to reduce or minimise risks. All gas and electrical checks are in place and fire drills take place at the required frequency. All the young people have had the opportunity to practice evacuating the building. The home has appropriate and up to date insurance.

The system for selection and vetting of staff largely serves to protect the young people. All the required checks are undertaken prior to staff starting employment, however, the home does not log on files that they verify why previous employment with children ended. The manager stated that referees are always contacted but that this information is not always recorded. A system is in place to ensure that Criminal Record Bureau checks on staff are updated.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive individual support in line with their placement plans. The managers and staff work to ensure that they receive services to meet their needs and work co-operatively with other professionals for the benefit of the young people. Staff know of services in the area and inform young people about who they can contact for assistance or advice. From discussions with staff it is evident that a lot more individual work is done with young people than is recorded. They are clearly skilled at engaging young people and are innovative in finding ways to meet individual needs where young people are reluctant to attend appointments.

Education is actively promoted and staff work with education staff to meet individual needs. There is a clear expectation that young people will attend education and staff are persistent in making sure they are up on time and ready to attend. Good communication with schools ensures that any issues are addressed and staff attend school meetings and events. Where young people are temporarily out of school educational activities take place in the house. Older young people are encouraged and supported to look for work or attend college.

Young people are offered a range of activities and are encouraged to take part in community activities. Staff work to identify areas of interest and find appropriate activities. Young people's friends are welcomed in the home and sometimes stay for a meal. All the young people have the opportunity to go on holiday.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people have their needs assessed and written placement plans outline how they will be met. These plans are compiled with the young people who also have a personal file which holds their current plan, reward system, contact numbers for friends and family and monthly planner sheets which include appointments, individual sessions, contact arrangements and activities. Young people ask for their personal file regularly to look up phone numbers and this encourages them to read their plans. The plans are clear and in appropriate language and are used by staff to inform individual work. The managers and staff work to get full written information from local authorities, largely successfully, however there are a few gaps.

Statutory reviews assess young people's progress and in addition regularly summaries are sent to placing social workers. Staff discuss the placement plans, review them regularly and revise them as necessary. Young people are encouraged and supported to attend their reviews or give their views and comments via their key worker.

Young people are able to maintain contact with family and friends and staff are committed to supporting them in this. Where possible they work in partnership with parents for the benefit of the young people. Parents are encouraged to visit or phone and staff involve them in decision

making where possible. They work to establish and maintain positive working relationships with parents.

Staff are sensitive to the feelings of young people moving into or leaving the home. Where possible this is done in a planned way. In deciding on placements the managers consider the needs of the resident group and young people are appropriately placed. Young people who have left the home still visit and are provided with support, assistance and advice.

Young people have a voice, are consulted as part of everyday life and are involved in decision making at all levels. They participate in care planning, own their placement plans and know that they can read much of what staff write about them. Young people's meetings take place and they are consulted in key working session individually. The home functions in a manner which enhances independence and gives opportunities to make everyday choices. The views of placing authorities and parents is sought and recorded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps prepare them and support them into adulthood. There is ongoing work with all the young people to enhance their life skills at age appropriate levels. Staff balance the need for independence with safety issues in line with risk assessments. Pathway plans are in place for older young people to allow them to practice working to a budget before leaving. All the young people are encouraged to do their own washing, make appointments and learn to cook meals.

Appropriate allowances are in place and young people choose their own clothes and personal items. They are encouraged to save for larger items.

The house is decorated and furnished to a high standard and is large enough for the number of young people. All are encouraged to personalise their bedrooms and contribute to the décor of communal areas. The home is kept clean and any repairs are carried out as necessary. The second staff sleep in bed is in a lounge.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. A policy is in place and staff have had training. Cultural, religious and identity needs are an integral part of care planning. The managers and staff actively avoid institutional language and where young people are living outside of their home area their local newspapers are obtained so that they can keep in touch with events. The staff work actively to increase young people's knowledge of other cultures and address any inappropriate comments. Young people have memory boxes and diaries which they can take with them when they leave. Equal opportunities is promoted in all aspects.

Young people receive care and the services they need from competent and well trained staff. Staff retention is good and the home uses only their own bank staff who are trained and qualified. This ensures consistency and continuity of care for the young people. Over 80% of staff have gained National Vocational Qualifications in the care of children and young people and they receive a range of training, including specific training to meet individual needs. The staff clearly work co-operatively and communicate well for the benefit of the young people.

Staff meetings take place in which individual young people's progress is discussed. The staff do not have formal supervision and appraisals frequently enough to meet National Minimum Standards. Staff say they are well supported and can always contact a manager for advice or assistance. There are clear arrangements for the deputy manager to cover during the manager's absence. Rotas allow for handover time and recording and demonstrate that there are sufficient staff on duty to meet the needs of the young people.

The home is well managed and monitored. Visits under Regulation 33 take place monthly and comprehensive reports are compiled which the manager welcomes and ensures that any deficits are acted upon. She and the deputy also monitor the functioning of the home through file audits, staff supervision and direct observation. There is a clear improvement agenda which the staff are involved in and a development plan is in place. Reflective practice is encouraged and the managers provide effective leadership.

Young people's files largely contain information which reflects their progress. However, there are some inaccuracies and incomplete records. Much of the individual work done with young people is not fully logged and some information is recorded in more than one place. The managers and staff acknowledge that this is an area for development.

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):

- demonstrate that where a person has previously worked with children or vulnerable adults, verification of why the employment ended is gained (NMS 27)
- continue to work to gain full written information from local authorities to inform care planning (NMS 2)
- ensure that staff sleep in rooms are not part of the communal living area (NMS 24)
- ensure that all staff receive formal supervision and appraisal in line with National Minimum Standards (NMS 28)
- ensure that young people's needs, development and progress are fully recorded to reflect their individuality (NMS 35).