

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Trevor Hall
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Date of last inspection	20 May 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 children's home that is part of a large organisation operated by a local authority. The home provides care for up to two young people aged between 10 to under 18 years on admission who have significant, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home is a three bedroom semi-detached house, situated in a housing estate and the young people are able to access local leisure activities in the immediate neighbourhood. The home has transport to take the young people to those facilities that are travelling distance away. The home provides each of the young people with an individual bedroom. To the rear of the building is an enclosed garden, which provides space for a range of activities. To the front of the building is a small garden with no off road parking facilities.

Summary

The inspection was an unannounced full inspection, the home's last key inspection, it's first since registration was undertaken on 20 May 2008, when no actions or no recommendations were raised. The home was judged at that point to be good. This inspection looked at all key standards and several non-key standards. This inspection raised no new actions but made five new recommendations. Young people living within this home receive good support to remain healthy, however, recording of menus require more detail. Young people live in a home, where their safety is generally well maintained, however, some improvement in recording of room searches, sanctions used and in some of the home's assessments of risk are required. This home encourages young people to take an active part in the way it runs and encourages them to make the most of their potential and to make a positive contribution to the life of the home. This home is well managed because young people benefit from living in an environment that is centred on meeting their individual needs. Young people living here receive good individual support and their education and health is encouraged and appropriately promoted.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

None requirements previously made.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people living at this home are supported so that their health and wellbeing are actively promoted. Staff involve and engage with young people about a range of issues that enable them to be more aware about their own health. Health issues that relate to ethnicity, race, sexuality, faith and belief are fully assessed in respect of each young person and are respected by the staff team.

Menu records were examined and whilst it is clear that the young people are provided with a varied diet, the records lack detail and did not always record what was actually eaten as opposed to what had been planned. There is little evidence of any appropriate nutritional forethought within the menu planning process, which relies more on young peoples preferences and dislikes than any nutritional content. Young people are involved in the menu planning process which ensures that their likes and dislikes are known and accounted for. Young people are able to

make drinks and snacks between meals and a range of fresh fruit is freely available. Mealtimes are a very sociable occasion and these routines are promoted as being an important part of daily life in the home.

Young people's health needs are being consistently identified which results in good staff support when accessing appropriate health services. Detailed health plans including all required information form part of each young person's placement plan so that all their known medical needs are appropriately catered for. Young people receive appropriate and prompt medical services because consent for treatment and first aid is given. Young people have access to a range of external services and professionals to help them deal with emotional and social needs. Appointments are made to promote preventative health care including dental and optical checks. Young people are given good support when they are unwell because staff are quick to liaise with general practitioners and other clinical specialists when needed. Young people live in an environment where their good health and wellbeing is promoted.

Young people's health and safety is also promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration of medication. Administration records demonstrate staff are following pharmacy instructions in relation to the health needs of individual young people. Medication records are seen as key to the effective management of healthcare matters. The home has a sustained record of full compliance with the administration, safekeeping and disposal of medication. Overall, young people's health and safety is protected through the organisation, management and administration of medication.

Staff respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs appropriately as they have access to first aid boxes and are trained in basic first aid skills. Young people's health and safety is further promoted by managers who monitor all accidents and injuries that occur in the home.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The welfare and safety of children are promoted by the local authority's policy and procedures and the home's established systems for keeping children safe. The stability of the home, promoted by a considered admission practice and stable core staff team, enhances the way in which young people can be protected. Staff receive ongoing training in child protection and behaviour management that helps underpin safe day-to-day practice.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality are promoted by sound guidance and good staff practice. Staff ensure that they do not enter children's rooms without knocking. Children's administrative records are maintained securely and contents are not discussed inappropriately. Staff are aware of the children's right to privacy and how this may be safely promoted. Each young person has their own lockable bedroom, to which staff hold a second key in case the first is lost or to enable them to gain access in an emergency.

The home has appropriate policies and procedures in respect of staff searching young people's rooms and how these searches should be conducted and recorded. It was apparent, however, from checking the home's room search log, that staff are not always fully completing the record, often forgetting to give an adequate description of why a room search was felt appropriate or whether the young person was present at the time of the search or not. Without a fully completed record, it is not possible to ascertain that young people's privacy is always being fully respected.

The young people living at this home are aware of the reason they are being looked after and how staff will promote their safety and protection within the home and in public places. Staff are fully aware of the types of behaviour which children may display and accordingly develop risk assessments that minimise the potential for children to subject themselves or others to harm. Staff know how to respond to challenging behaviours and in circumstances where children may abscond. Children are encouraged to reflect on the consequences of their behaviour after such incidents to learn how to help themselves to be safe and behave responsibly.

Young people are encouraged and supported by their carers to behave in ways that will help prepare them for rehabilitation home or eventual independence. Staff help children identify and maintain safe behavioural boundaries that will help their reintegration and personal development. Children confirm that at this home staff help them address their problems and behaviour. The current format for the recording of sanctions meets all of the requirements of NMS 22.10, however, it is not always being fully completed by staff on each and every occasion that sanctions are applied, as such both young people and staff are potentially having their safety compromised.

Staff working at the children's home take some positive steps to keep children and visitors safe from all environmental hazards including fire. For example, risk assessments on the environment are completed and updated on a regular basis and staff within the home are all involved in these routines to ensure that health and safety is promoted by everyone. The recent addition of two new computers in the home has not been included in the home's most recent fire risk assessment as such this document is out of date and does not adequately assess the true potential of risk within the home. Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), for electrical safety has been done on all equipment in the home and all safety equipment has been serviced with approved regularity and is properly maintained. Generally this home does take the safety and welfare of its residents seriously and young people do live in a home which is generally both physically safe and secure.

This home has robust procedures in place for the monitoring of visitors to the home. Staff personnel files were not available on the inspection date, due to them being held centrally elsewhere, these will be examined at a later date. The responsible local authority has a clearly defined recruitment process which protects young people by ensuring that all of the NMS requirements are met, in all instances, prior to any staff member being deployed into the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive skilled support from the home that meets their individual needs. Staff are fully aware of the young people's needs and routines. Young people's needs are detailed in individual placement plans to ensure that requirements and support are identified. Specialist support and interventions are provided to meet specific special needs once these are identified.

Arrangements for young people's education are promoted in the home's education policy which clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of residential staff in relation to school attendance and learning. Staff give active practical and emotional support to the young people who have difficulties with school in addition to the normal level of support provided for all young people at the home. Each young person has a detailed individual education plan describing how a young person's education needs will be met.

Staff support young people to access and attend various community based activities that are consistent with their expressed preferences and choices. Known and potential risks to young people are assessed, recorded and reviewed on a regular basis. Staff are using the home's records and their knowledge of individual young people to ensure risks are minimised and that they are safe.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are consulted and involved in decisions about their placement and future plans whilst living at this home. A range of documents detail the care and support needed and how this is to be provided to young people. Young people are involved in their care planning and have regular opportunities to discuss their needs with staff. Staff are successful in engaging with young people and are focused on achieving the stated aims and objectives of individual plans.

The planned care received by each young person living at this home is effective because each individual has a Placement Plan that identifies the purpose of the placement and how the placing authority's care plan for the young person will be progressed. Up-to-date Looked after Children's (LAC) documentation is completed on each young person which refers directly to the current care arrangements. Young people's records demonstrate that staff are flexible and innovative in their approach to managing young people's behaviours and in promoting positive outcomes. Case files confirm that the young people's progress is reviewed within the statutory time periods. Staff attend regular in-house meetings to record and update each young person's general progress during the interim period. Monthly reports are completed by key workers and the home prepares chronological reports to keep placing authorities informed. Placement plans include summarised health and education plan details.

Young people are provided with good support by staff to have regular contact with family members. The home's staff are well aware of the importance young people attach to family contact. Staff regularly support and assist in transporting young people to various locations to facilitate contact. Records are kept of all contact and how the visits went for young people. This information is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the agreed contact plans to ensure young people and their families fully benefit from the arrangements.

The staff team are committed to ensuring that all young people have a voice about their care and their stay at this home, consequently, they are routinely consulted about all aspects of their lives. Young people take part in meetings organised by staff to explore a range of issues that may affect their daily living arrangements. Staff are committed to ensuring that views and opinions of young people are valued and that they are focused on involving all young people in the life and routines of the home.

Young people living at this home generally enjoy good relationships with the staff group, based upon mutual respect and tolerance. Relationships between young people and staff are supportive and professional. Staff receive training in behaviour management which helps them develop their skills and understanding in the area of residential childcare. The home has a range of written staff guidance that clearly outlines relationship boundaries and expectations. Young people are being supported to develop and learn about appropriate relationships through staff feedback and key worker sessions. Young people are benefiting from living in a home where staff are promoting good relationships through effective communication.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive adequate allowances to cover personal requisites and clothing and are well informed about their entitlements because the home has good arrangements and systems in place to manage allowances, personal needs and pocket money. Key workers are responsible for ensuring that the young people maintain an appropriate stock of essential clothing. Once these are established and maintained, the young people are at liberty to save for special items of choice. Pocket money is clearly recorded and being paid to the young people on a weekly basis.

The accommodation is domestic in style, homely, well-decorated, maintained and furnished to a good standard, as a result young people enjoy a pleasant living environment. They respect the quality of the accommodation, particularly within their own bedrooms. Young people confirmed they enjoy having the space to follow their interests and hobbies as well as relaxing in good homely surroundings. The home provides the right environment to ensure the social and personal needs of each young person are being met.

A programme of maintenance and repair is ongoing, however, this does not impact on the care young people receive. There are good systems in place that recognise maintenance issues and those with health and safety implications are rectified as a priority with evidence that demonstrates the owners invest generously in the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This home is an effectively managed home which contributes to the positive impact on the care and support young people receive. Overall, young people are being looked after by an experienced, qualified and enthusiastic group of staff that work positively with them to ensure that their needs are met. The registered manager provides clear and effective leadership to the staff team regarding the aims and objectives of the service; because of this, the home continues to maintain a consistent staff team that supports good continuity of care. The home's Statement of Purpose includes all information, as required by Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations. The young person's guide is presented in a child-friendly way and gives a good summary of what young people can expect from the home.

There is good leadership and management support because the registered manager is qualified, skilled and experienced and provides strong and effective leadership to the staff team and young people. The registered manager is actively involved in the day to day operation of the home and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. Young people are receiving good support because most of the staff team are qualified and suitably experienced. The majority of staff are qualified to National Vocational Qualification Level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People.

Good emphasis is given to staff training and development which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs. Young people are provided with appropriate levels of supervision and support because staff manage their time effectively and are deployed in a way that meets their needs. The staff rotas are flexible to meet the changing needs and circumstances of young people. There are clear and accountable systems in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the manager. Good management systems are in place to share information between different

shift teams. Young people are being nurtured and comprehensively supported because their needs are being met and risks are managed in a preventative way.

The home's registered manager maintains all of the records required by both regulation and the NMS, including a register of admissions and discharges from the home. Good systems are in place to monitor the service and daily lives of young people currently living in the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. All of the home's recording systems take account of potential needs in relation to a young person's diversity such as identity, race, culture and religion. The home provides an environment where the value of equality and diversity is understood, promoted and celebrated.

The local authority has established a pattern of management monitoring and reporting procedures, which is effectively implemented by the home's registered manager. The local authority conducts monthly review meetings to look at welfare issues within their homes. Findings are reported back to the local authority. Records seen demonstrate that the content of these reports reflect an accurate picture of life for young people resident here. These reports are available to staff.

Young people's care files are very well organised to include all of the information detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Confidential or third party information is kept in a separate section of the care file to enable the home to respond, in a timely manner, to any request made by a young person to read their care file.

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 record of menus (as served) demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet (this refers to adequate nutritional forethought being applied to the menu planning process and that this planning is recorded) (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that the record of menus (as served) demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet. (this refers to ensuring that menu records are sufficiently detailed to enable a proper assessment of the menu's nutritional content to be undertaken and that these records of meals actually taken are recorded as well as those that are planned) (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that all searches of young people's bedrooms comply with the home's stated policy and procedure and that they are recorded appropriately in the home's room search log (NMS 9.8)

- ensure that staff complete all aspects of the home's sanction record (this refers to staff not always completing the section detailing the reason why a sanction has been applied) (NMS 22.10)
- ensure that the home's fire risk assessment is updated annually and whenever a significant change to the home's environment affects the assessment (NMS 26.2)