

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10 March 2010
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	16 July 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 is a privately run and owned children's home by a company with a number of other registered homes. The responsible individual is a qualified social worker with considerable relevant child care experience.

This particular home is registered to accommodate up to two young people of either sex from 10 to 17 years old. Its overall aim is 'to meet the needs of young people, work together to effect changes which are positive, and enable the young people to realise their potential'.

It is a detached and spacious property standing in its own private grounds, and has no distinguishing features to suggest it is a children's home. On the ground floor there is a domestic kitchen and separate utility room, an education room, dining room, a communal lounge and toileting facilities. On the second, there is a choice of baths and showers and all the bedrooms are single which young people can personalise.

Summary

This judgement is reached following an unannounced full key inspection of the home which took place over two days. Compliance with the regulations and the key national minimum standards was assessed and young people were actively involved in this process.

They confirm that they are generally happy and settled at this home and want to remain there until they are fully prepared for living independently. They benefit from good relationships with most of the staff and feel able to approach them about any concerns they may have. They say that they feel safe and are protected from bullying and intimidation and that their privacy is respected. They like the meals on offer and have good opportunities to develop their cooking skills.

There are also good opportunities for young people to enjoy and achieve and maximise their full potentials, positively contribute to their daily lives and futures and to develop their independence skills. Moreover they have been actively involved in choosing the décor and furnishings, which has resulted in a very homely environment.

Praise and encouragement in the form of footprints are prominently displayed in the home highlighting many positive behaviours and young people say 'this has now become a competition between us'. Independent reviewing officers have also commented on the 'very positive' change in young people since moving to this home acknowledging that they are 'doing well' and, 'challenging behaviours have lessened because they are settled'.

Parents and social workers are equally satisfied with the quality of care provided and confirm that they are kept well informed of their progress.

The home is well managed and monitored and it is sufficiently staffed at all times to meet the unique needs and personal preferences of the young people currently placed and to safeguard and promote their welfare. However, they have not all completed a National Vocational Qualification in caring for children and young people at level 3, in line with the national minimum standards.

The two main shortfalls are that the staff are not trained in the safe storage, administration, recording and disposal of medicines, and the current practices in respect to medication are not sufficiently robust, so young people's health and well-being could be compromised.

The only concern raised by young people is the movement of staff to other homes within the organisation. They would like a more consistent staff team.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Five actions were raised following the last inspection on 16 July 2009. In response menu records now provide documentary evidence of varied and nutritious meals and sanction records now include all the required details. Fire extinguishers and emergency lighting are checked every month, but the latter is not sufficiently frequent.

All staff are now trained in the positive care and control of young people to help to ensure safe practice, and in food hygiene. However, none are trained in the safe storage, administration and recording of medication.

Eight recommendations were also made, and consequently individualised health plans are now more detailed. Moreover, sanction records are now recorded on separate pages to enable young people to access their own records without compromising the confidentiality of others. They also have the opportunity to comment on, and sign, their care plan in acknowledgement of their understanding of, and agreement to, the contents.

There is now a completed pro-forma on every staff file covering all the details required by the regulations to evidence a robust recruitment and selection process.

However, young people still raise their concerns about the movement of staff to other homes within the organisation. They argue that as they already struggle to establish and maintain positive relationships this practice does not help them to meet this identified need.

Moreover, only 50% of the staff team have completed a National Vocational Qualification in caring for children and young people at level 3, which is still below the national minimum standard. In response the company have now decided to initiate disciplinary action should there be unnecessary delays in this matter.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Overall there are satisfactory arrangements in place to help to ensure that young people living at this home remain fit and healthy including a 'vast improvement in diet and exercise'.

They are actively involved in planning meals, food shopping and cooking thereby improving their independence skills. They also exercise a genuine choice in the food they prefer to eat and consequently they enjoy the meals provided. Examples include, shepherd's pie, carrots, onions and celery, or, pasta with bacon, ham and cheese, vegetable burger and chips or toad in the hole. Other recent homemade meals include pork chops, mashed potato, sweet corn and

broccoli, sweet and sour chicken with noodles, gammon steak, egg and chips, corned beef hash and chicken fajitas.

There is a suitable sized dining area with sufficient furniture to enable all the young people and staff to sit down and eat together, relax and enjoy these social occasions.

Detailed individualised health plans are in place evidencing that all routine appointments, immunisations and statutory medicals are up to date, and specialist services are provided to meet specific needs including smoking cessation, emotional well-being and sexual health.

All staff are trained in first aid to help to ensure an appropriate response to any minor incidents and accident records are satisfactorily maintained. However, the practice in respect to the safe administration and recording of medication is not sufficiently robust. In particular staff are not specifically trained and records suggest that the stock is not consistently being carefully scrutinised in line with the home's own procedures. Moreover, this shortfall has already been discussed at a staff meeting. The current pro-forma records the direction for use and the time of administration but does not include the reasons for the prescription.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Overall there are good arrangements in place to help to ensure that the young people living at this home, the staff who work there and all visitors are kept safe.

Young people confirm that their privacy is respected at this home. Arrangements include single bedrooms which they can lock with their own key, mobile phones and credit to enable them to have private telephone conversations, and a good range of communal rooms to entertain visitors in private. The necessity for room searches are rare and the records are suitably maintained.

Young people enjoy particularly sound relationships with most of the staff and feel able to approach them with any concerns. They also know how to formally complain and have exercised this right, in respect to, for example, certain sanctions being imposed which was upheld and asserting again that, 'we should have one staff team that stay with us throughout our time here'.

All the staff are trained in safeguarding to help to ensure an appropriate response to any disclosures of abuse. Anti bullying contracts signed by all the staff and young people are in place and young people say, 'we feel safe at this home and are protected from bullying and intimidation'.

Young people are generally happy and settled at this home and consequently incidents of being missing from the home have significantly improved. To their credit they have also resisted pressure from their peers to stay out after the agreed time for returning to the home at night.

Good behaviour and effort is actively encouraged and rewarded at this home, which is having the desired effect. Moreover, independent reviewing officers are acknowledging these positive changes saying, 'historically young people were putting their well-being at risk through engagement in risky behaviours but now they are settled in this placement. There have been no recent missing from home incidents and they are sticking to boundaries.'

Sanctions have also reduced and those imposed are closely monitored by the manager to ensure they are fair and appropriate to the particular misdemeanour. Moreover, there has been no cause for the use of physical intervention for a significant period of time at this home.

There is clear documentary evidence that all the required safety checks are undertaken, and building and fire risk assessments and safety certificates are in place to evidence a safe and well maintained building. Fire evacuations also take place every month at different times of the day and night and involve young people so they know exactly what to do in the event of a real fire.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

There are good opportunities at this home to enable young people to enjoy and achieve and maximise their full potentials, including the provision of appropriate specialist services to meet their assessed needs.

Young people confirm that they receive good support with their education and teachers report that they are 'engaging well and making positive progress'. Individual interests and talents are also encouraged and supported including singing and playing an impressive range of musical instruments.

Other recent and regular constructive activities they participate in include painting, meals out, ice skating and salsa dancing. They also enjoyed their summer holiday in Wales where they swam and went horse riding every day. Young people say, 'we can do whatever we want within reason', and confirm that they are just as happy staying in the home and 'chilling' by watching a dvd, playing board games together or having a beauty night.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The young people currently living at this home are appropriately placed, and there are good opportunities to enable them all to contribute positively to their daily lives and to their futures, including regular individual key worker sessions where relevant issues are discussed.

Their needs are assessed, and detailed and individualised placement plans are in place showing clearly how these needs will be met, which are regularly reviewed and revised as necessary.

Statutory reviews are also undertaken at the required frequencies and independent chairs particularly highlight the 'comprehensive' reports produced by this home. Moreover young people attend and fully participate in the discussions making it very clear that they wish to remain at this home until they are ready for independence. Social workers confirm that 'the young people's current accommodation arrangements are appropriate and stable and the placement is meeting all their needs.'

Constructive contact with family and friends, in line with any legal directions and personal preferences, is actively encouraged and supported by the staff, and parents are particularly appreciative of this established good practice. They write, 'I cannot thank the staff enough for bringing my daughter to see me every weekend'.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

There are good opportunities at this home for young people to develop the skills necessary for future independent living. Consequently they are now already competent in using public transport, budgeting, cooking and washing and ironing.

This home is suitably decorated and furnished throughout and young people particularly like their bedrooms, which they have personalised. They have also been actively involved in making this house a home by choosing new curtains, rugs, pictures and ornaments for the communal rooms.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The homes Statement of Purpose is regularly reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure it accurately reflects the current policies and practices at the home. Young people also have a personal copy of a user-friendly children's guide detailing the services available, and the expectations on them.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people are treated and respected as individuals in their own right. In particular their choice of religion is actively encouraged and supported and regular culture nights take place giving young people the opportunity to learn about other festivals and cultures and to try different foods. Most recently they took a key role in exploring Christmas and new year celebrations in Britain, Spain and China and they are currently extending their knowledge about the Middle East. Specific training to all staff in the organisation is to take place in May 2010.

The manager is suitably qualified and experienced and provides clear guidance and direction to the team. There are equally suitable deputising arrangements in place. This home is also sufficiently staffed at all times to meet the unique needs and personal preferences of the young people currently placed. There are robust monitoring systems in place and Regulation 33 and 34 reports highlight the many established good practices in this home and the few shortfalls identified are efficiently addressed.

Young people's files are securely stored and well maintained. There is also good documentary evidence that they regularly have the opportunity to read their records, and comment on, and sign, the entries.

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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13	ensure all staff are suitably trained in the safe storage, administration and recording of medication (Regulation 26(3)(b))	30 April 2010
13	ensure there are robust procedures and practices in place to ensure the safe administration of medication and that the records are satisfactorily maintained at all times. (Regulation 29, Schedule 4(5))	31 March 2010

Recommendations

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure there is clear documentary evidence that young people's wishes and feelings are given due consideration in regard to the movement of staff to other homes in the organisation (NMS 8.11)
- ensure an ongoing training programme until at least 80% of the care staff have completed a National Vocational Qualification in caring for children and young people at level 3 (NMS 29.5)
- ensure there is clear documentary evidence of nightly checks of the emergency lighting (NMS 26.8)
- ensure all staff are trained in promoting equality and diversity. (NMS 31.1)