

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC372117
Inspection date	17 June 2010
Inspector	Lynn O'Driscoll
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 March 2010
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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 integrated, full key inspection with an education colleague which took place over three days. Compliance with all the regulations and the national minimum standards was thoroughly assessed and young people and staff were actively involved in the process.

The young people currently living at this home are very happy and settled and fully participate in day to day decision making. They enjoy particularly sound relationships with the stable staff team and the other young people and consequently enjoy spending quality time together. They say, 'this has been the best placement so far. Staff have supported me in everything.'

They benefit from a very homely and relaxed environment that is consistently supportive, stable and safe and consequently they are making excellent progress in all the outcome areas. Moreover, they now care about doing well. Independent chairs of statutory reviews acknowledge that 'challenging behaviours have significantly lessened because they are so settled.' Social workers also confirm that all their needs are being met and parents are highly satisfied with the quality of care provided, and especially the promotion of contact.

Young people's trust, self-esteem and confidence has markedly increased and they are now rightly proud of their achievements since moving to this placement, highlighting that they now go to school and work hard, no longer go missing or take drugs, and eat healthily.

The dedicated and competent staff team are very happy in their respective roles and benefit from very strong leadership and support and an excellent range of ongoing and relevant training opportunities to continue to develop their expertise.

All the required documentation is in very good order and clearly evidences high quality individualised care.

This home consistently makes positive changes to constantly improve the quality of care provided. Staff say, 'we continually meet to review existing systems and work practices and develop them wherever possible'.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Two actions were raised at the last inspection on 10 March 2010 which were efficiently and satisfactorily addressed. In response the procedures and practices in respect to the safe storage, administration, recording and disposal of medication has significantly tightened up and all the staff are now specifically trained to ensure consistent and safe practice.

Four recommendations were also made. Young people's views have been listened to and they are very pleased that there have been no recent staff changes. A visual check of the emergency lighting is now undertaken every night to ensure it remains in good working order. There is also very clear documentary evidence that all the team are being specifically trained in promoting equality and diversity on 5 August 2010. Moreover there is a strong commitment to the ongoing programme of National Vocational Qualifications in Caring for Children and Young People at Level 3 until 100% of the staff team are trained.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Overall there are outstanding 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. Stress related skin complaints have also ceased. Young people recognise the excellent progress made saying, 'When I came here I looked rough and was skin and bone. I didn't eat and took drugs. Now I eat healthily and I am a healthy weight.'

Young people are actively involved in choosing menus, food shopping and cooking and consequently really like the meals on offer. They are also growing an excellent selection of vegetables, salads and herbs and researching and making meals from other countries. Menu records are in very good order clearly detailing exactly what they have chosen to eat, and they also show that a genuine alternative is always provided if they do not want the main meal on offer. Recent homemade meals include tuna pasta, chicken, bacon and rice, corned beef hash, meatballs spaghetti and cheesy garlic bread, and chicken stew and dumplings.

The dining area has sufficient furniture to enable all the young people and staff to sit down together, relax and enjoy these social occasions.

Excellent recording provides very clear details of individual health needs and how these are being met including the timely provision of appropriate specialist services. Staff ensure statutory medicals, routine appointments, treatments and immunisations are all undertaken at the required frequencies and young people say, 'I am well looked after when I am ill.'

All the staff are trained in first aid to ensure an appropriate response to any minor injuries and accident records are suitably maintained. Medication is securely stored and administration records are in particularly good order.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Overall there are outstanding 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.

This report acknowledges that for a significant period of time, there has been no 'missing from home', no need for room searches or restraints, and sanctions and incidents of self-harm have significantly reduced. To the young people's credit, drug misuse has also stopped. Moreover, with staff support, they are successfully resisting peer group pressure to place themselves in vulnerable situations. Parents are thrilled and say, 'she is like a different child'.

Young people say, 'I feel safe in this home and the staff respect my dignity and privacy' and, 'staff know me well and care about how I am doing'. They respond exceptionally well to the clear and consistent boundaries in place and to the constant positive reinforcement of good behaviour and effort. Direct work is also enabling them to explore what constitutes healthy relationships including trust and respect which is having the desired effect.

They also enjoy particularly sound relationships with the staff and therefore feel very comfortable approaching them with any concerns, and they are listened to. They also confirm that they know how to make a formal complaint should the need ever arise.

All the staff are trained in safeguarding to ensure an appropriate response to any disclosures. This home also notifies Ofsted of all significant events in a timely manner which clearly evidences that staff work very closely with all relevant agencies to help safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. Moreover, staff take a proactive approach to countering bullying and consequently young people say they, 'feel protected from bullying and intimidation'.

All the staff are trained and receive timely refreshers in the positive care and control of young people. Sanction records include all the required details and they are closely monitored to ensure a consistent approach. Young people confirm, 'if I break the rules I am dealt with fairly' and they are actively encouraged to access these records and make comments which are efficiently followed up by the manager.

Health and safety records are in very good order and all the staff are specifically trained. All the required safety certificates are in place to evidence a safe and well-maintained building and risk assessments are regularly revised and updated as necessary. There is very clear documentary evidence that all internal fire safety checks are undertaken at the required frequencies and monthly fire evacuations at different times of the day and evening take place. These always involve young people so they know exactly what to do in the event of a real fire.

There are robust recruitment and selection processes in place to help to ensure a safe and competent workforce. Staff files include all the required information and evidence thorough checks of, for example, any gaps in employment history and references. There is also an effective system in place for the renewal of criminal record checks every three years.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

There are outstanding opportunities at this home to enable young people to enjoy and achieve and thereby maximise their full potentials. This includes giving all the staff team specific responsibilities to ensure all young people's unique needs are well met. They also ensure the

timely provision of an excellent range of appropriate specialist services to meet specific and particularly complex needs.

Staff actively promote and support young people's education and consequently their attendance and progress is excellent. This includes successful reintegration into mainstream schooling, actively choosing to do extra homework, very good exam results in core subjects and a place at college. Young people commented, 'before I came to this placement I was not attending school at all and now I am doing really well' and, 'I have achieved my dream of going to college to study music and I am starting at a higher level'.

The in-house educational provision was judged to be good and the inspector particularly highlighted that 'care and education staff work well together in the interests of the students'.

The range of constructive activities available to young people is excellent. Individual interests and talents are actively encouraged and supported including singing and playing an impressive range of musical instruments. This is noticeably building up their self-confidence and esteem. Moreover, they are particularly looking forward to an all inclusive holiday on a five star complex in the Canaries provided by the company in recognition of the excellent progress young people have made in this home. Young people also spoke very positively about their previous activity holiday where they had the opportunity to try new experiences. It was described as, 'the best week ever'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The young people living at this home are appropriately placed and very happy and settled. They benefit from an outstanding range of opportunities to contribute positively to the day to day running of this home and recent changes made as a result of listening to their views includes friends being allowed to stay overnight, increase in pocket money and having pets. They say, 'I love my hamster'.

Detailed, individualised and regularly updated placement plans are in place. They draw together all available information from a wide variety of sources to clearly identify young people's unique and holistic needs and how their needs will be best met. The stable staff team have an in depth knowledge of the young people and consequently know how to support them effectively.

Reviews take place at the required frequencies and young people attend and actively participate. Staff produce progress reports to inform the discussions which are described by independent chairs as 'comprehensive' and they empower young people to voice their opinions about their own futures. Staff say, 'we actively promote young people's rights and encourage them to participate in decisions regarding the home'.

Constructive contact with family and friends, in line with any legal directions and personal preferences, is actively promoted and supported and consequently significant relationships have been very positively re-established to the delight of the young people. Parents specifically wrote to the home saying, 'I cannot thank you enough for bringing my child to see me every weekend'.

Individual key worker sessions take place particularly frequently and very relevant and highly sensitive issues are explored. Consultation with social workers confirm that 'the young people's

current accommodation arrangements are appropriate and stable and the placement is meeting all their needs.'

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

This home provides age appropriate opportunities for all the young people to develop the social and practical skills needed for future. Consequently the young people are making excellent progress in respect to, for example, budgeting, washing and ironing, food shopping and cooking, and using public transport. Their attitudes are also maturing and in particular they are developing a strong sense of justice. Young people say, 'I maintain my own bedroom, washing, cooking and doing the pots. I also have a hamster which I care for with my own money. I've got into college and plan to get a flat and a career in music.'

The company as a whole also has outstanding arrangements in place to enable young people to have a successful transition into full independence including single bedded units, self-contained flats within larger children's homes and independent apartments in the community with outreach support from care staff.

This particular home is a spacious detached property in its own well-maintained grounds located in a residential area. Young people remain actively involved in choosing the décor and furnishings and rugs, ornaments and pictures which has created a very homely and relaxing atmosphere. Young people really like their bedrooms which are highly personalised.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's Statement of Purpose is very regularly reviewed and revised as necessary to ensure it accurately reflects the current aims, policies and practices. Young people also have a personal copy of a user-friendly children's guide detailing the services available to them within the home, the wider organisation and the local community.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people are treated and respected as individuals in their own right and the home is always well staffed to meet the unique needs and personal preferences of the young people placed. Recent improvements within the company as a whole include specific training for all the workforce, more detail in the new placement packages with regard to meeting the young people's cultural needs and a recruitment policy to specifically target and encourage applicants from a diversity of ethnic backgrounds.

This home is exceptionally well managed by a qualified, experienced and child focussed individual who provides clear direction and encouragement to an equally dedicated staff team. They are all very happy in their respective roles, confirm that they work very well together and are genuinely very proud of the young people's significant achievements. They benefit from regular team meetings with open and honest debates, individual supervision sessions and an ongoing and varied training programme to continue to develop their knowledge and skills.

Robust monitoring systems are in place and the monthly reports clearly evidence that any shortfalls identified are efficiently addressed. However, although Regulation 34 reports provide factual information on all the matters specified in Schedule 6, this is not always evaluated and

they do not consistently evidence consultation with young people living in the home, their parents and placing authorities.

Young people's files are securely stored and in excellent order. They include all the legally required information, are clearly organised under the five outcomes and regularly reviewed and revised. Moreover, young people take full advantage of the regular opportunities to correct any mistakes, add their own comments and then sign to acknowledge their full agreement to the contents.

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):

- continue the ongoing programme of National Vocational Qualifications in Caring for Children and Young People at Level 3 until at least 80% of the staff team are trained (NMS 29.5)
- ensure Regulation 34 reports clearly show an evaluation of all the matters specified in Schedule 6 and evidence regular consultation with young people living in the home, their parents and placing authorities as a fundamental part of the process. (NMS 33)