

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	4 August 2010
Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	10 February 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 small children's home that looks after one young person, aged between 10 and 17 years. It is a two-storey, detached property, in a rural setting. The nature of the home allows staff to adjust the environment and the care provided to meet the specific needs of the children and young people accommodated. The priority for staff is to 'provide a safe, warm, nurturing and empowering environment to afford children and young people the care and control to which they are entitled at this stage in their life.'

Summary

This was a full unannounced key inspection. One young person is living in the home who was present during the inspection and actively contributed to the process. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as good with many examples of very good practice. Young people receive an individualised care package that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing needs and is effective in addressing behaviour to promote health and well-being. The home is well decorated and maintained providing a very homely environment in which children are nurtured and enabled to develop. The registered person provides good direction and leadership to an enthusiastic, well-trained staff team thereby enabling a good quality of overall service. Staff are clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the care needs of the children they look after.

Only one recommendation has been made as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection it was recommended that the registered person ensure that regular fire precautionary drills are recorded. This recommendation has been acted upon to confirm that the organisation places importance on how children are kept safe.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Children have access to a varied menu that promotes the importance of healthy eating and incorporates ethnic cuisine. The importance of diet on health is emphasised by staff who receive training in food preparation. Staff encourage children to help prepare their meals by providing practical guidance and supervision.

The health needs of children are carefully assessed prior to a child's admission to ensure they can be met. A comprehensive health plan addresses specific needs. Children receive good advice, guidance and support to promote personal safety and good health. This is achieved through consultation with relevant professionals including health advisors, key workers, company therapists and the placing authority social worker.

Staff at the home maintain positive links with local health care professionals and always seek professional advice for any health related concerns about the children being looked after. The registered provider's guidance and policies on health promotion for example regarding the use of drugs, alcohol, smoking and sexuality set a good reference point for staff consultation.

The recording of all accidents, the use of prescribed and over the counter medication, including for emergency treatment are robust. There is a clear medication policy in the home which complies with official advice and guidance. Storage of all medication is secure and in accordance with the company policies and guidance for ensuring safe practice. First aid arrangements in the home are supported by staff training that prepares them for dealing with minor accidents or health related emergencies.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The company policies and informed staff practice promotes the safety and welfare of children living in the home. These policies have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and enable good practice in areas of child protection, including countering bullying, effective behaviour management, dealing with missing persons and safeguarding children. All staff have access to, and know the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children's Board including how to recognise signs of abuse. The registered provider commissions ongoing staff training to ensure that all staff are aware of how to competently and safely look after children.

Staff base their management of behaviour on their comprehensive knowledge of individual children and by actively encouraging acceptable behaviour. Staffing levels are set at a level where children feel comfortable and able to discuss and maintain the standards of behaviour expected from them, thereby emulating normal social situations. Staff are able to treat children respectfully and recognise individual progress. This type of caring enables stability and good behaviour requiring the minimal use of sanctions or behavioural controls. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management including the safe and restricted application of physical restraint. Training in the approved restraint methodology is refreshed annually and all incidents are fully recorded and evaluated by the home's manager.

Children's right for privacy is respected by their carers. High levels of confidentiality are maintained by sensitive personal information being carefully stored and discretely communicated with other professionals. Children are provided with their own en-suite equipped bedrooms. Children know that staff are required to discuss their care in meetings as they are always invited to contribute their thoughts about the care they receive.

Potential dangers to children are actively evaluated by staff. Comprehensive risk assessments that broadly cover all aspects of safety in the living environment are compiled, for example, the risk from fire and environmental hazards, those emerging from behaviour and recreational activities including trips out. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed and take into account daily routines and any changes affecting the home such as staffing levels or alterations in the home's routine. Children living in the home play a compliant part by responding to fire precautionary drills, including false alarms.

Care staff take seriously any niggles or complaints children may have. This is demonstrated by concerns being effectively addressed long before they become a complaint. Areas where children may feel aggrieved, such as after a sanction are well recorded and always include opportunity

for children's views to be noted. The home has an effective complaint policy that is summarised in the young person's guide for the home. Children confirm that they know about this guide, how to complain and who they can complain to. Children can also make their views heard through advocates, social workers and independent visitors who visit the home.

Children are practically safeguarded by the provider's effective systems for the monitoring of all visitors to the home. No stranger is allowed access without an appointment and appropriate measures are in place to ensure children's protection. The registered provider's recruitment and selection process confirms that no staff start working with looked after children ahead of all necessary suitability checks being completed. Personnel files were inspected ahead of this visit. Skeleton staff files retained in the home summarise that all staff working there have been appropriately checked for their suitability, qualification and experience.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children are cared for by a well qualified and competent staff team who know how to promote child health and development. The single occupancy home is successful in looking after younger children who have a specific need for consistent care and support, explicit behavioural boundaries, positive adult nurturing and the need to feel safe and protected in a homely environment.

Children are encouraged and assisted with support to access a variety of in-house and community based activities that enhance their cultural self-awareness that helps improve their self-esteem. The manager and staff team promote the children's attitude and understanding of gender, diversity, acceptance and tolerance both within the home and the wider community by challenging inappropriate behaviour towards social difference in an age-appropriate manner.

Children receive access to services appropriate to their specific care and therapeutic needs from the registered provider's therapy team.

Children's academic needs are promoted by receiving full-time education. This service is provided by the company school. Attendance involves being transported and supported in the educational setting by their carers to offer a consistency of supervision. Education is provided within a national curriculum framework, which is amended to reflect each child's ability level to accentuate achievement. Practice and social skills related activity is also undertaken by children leading to Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network qualifications. Personal education plans and individual education plans are produced to support the care plan; however on this inspection these have not been brought up to date. The home practically celebrates children's accomplishments in school by displaying certificates of achievement and colourful school related project work.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Effective care planning is evidenced by focused plans that identify the purpose of the placement and how care plans will be progressed. Placement at this home is well planned and recognises the specific risks of placement with peers. Children's case files confirm that progress is regularly reviewed in a timely manner. Placing authorities are kept apprised of children's progress in placement through the compilation of monthly, outcome focused reports. Placement plans

include summarised health and education plan details that are regularly discussed at team meetings to confirm the accuracy and effectiveness of the care being provided. Comprehensive, informative reports are produced to inform each looked after child statutory review.

Meaningful contact with children's families is supported by the home when this is approved by the placing authority care plan. Children are practically supported on visits with the quality of contact interaction being recorded in placement plans and case file records, thereby ensuring children are not put at risk.

Children are actively involved with the decision making processes that affect the purpose and everyday running of the home. Well recorded key work sessions report upon individual child related matters such as confidentiality, cultural issues or how the children's views may be best represented. Daily interactions between staff and children confirm that this home provides a relaxed setting where children and staff jointly develop the care routines and shape the living environment.

Staff team meeting minutes demonstrate that children's issues are dealt with using a consistent, risk aware, child centred approach within clearly agreed parameters. Key worker session reports and the home's generic documentation confirm that staff provide realistic boundaries, are consistent and caring in their practice and actively promote children's welfare. Children feedback positively through their behaviour and inspection comments about the care they receive.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Placement in this children's home takes full account of the child's age, ability and specific needs. When applicable these may help prepare children for any future transitions towards family living or independence. At all ages children are encouraged to develop their capacity to self-help and improve social skills. Children are taught how to keep themselves clean, practice budgeting with their regular personal allowances, shop and to look after their own belongings and clothes as a feature of their care routine. Children can also demonstrate their skills in the kitchen with help preparing and cooking snacks and meals.

The home is rurally located but within reasonable access of necessary amenities and recreational facilities. Transport is provided as a necessary part of the care placement.

The home is well maintained and kept very clean. Living rooms, kitchen and sleeping areas are adequate in size, functional in appearance and well furnished. Children have ample personal space including their own en-suite equipped bedroom. The home is personalised by posters, photographs, certificates and personal belongings confirming ownership and the child's particular interests.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose includes the information prescribed by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations. Both the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide have been revised to ensure that they provide accurate and up-to-date information about what services the home can provide.

Children are well supported with every aspect of their everyday living by the small team of well-qualified staff who are committed to providing safe and consistent and culturally sensitive care. The experienced and qualified home's manager provides staff with regular, well recorded supervision and her familiarity with the registered provider's expectations.

Staff further develop their practice by having access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance enhanced by formalised company training opportunities. Staff meetings confirm that any concerns or tasks are addressed quickly. Staff have attended all statutory training and additional courses to equip them to provide care designed to meet assessed needs in a child focused manner.

The staff rota confirms that the complement of the home is as identified by the updated Statement of Purpose. Shortfalls are covered by house staff or known staff from other of the organisation's homes that reduce the potential for disruption to care routines and levels of support being provided. The arrangement for safe one to one work with children is put into practice following regularly reviewed risk assessments.

The home adopts a formal process to regularly monitor the operational efficiency and quality of care being provided. The content of the in-house monitoring is informative, confirming that the manager and her team provide consistent care. Monthly monitoring takes place through the use of a regulation 33 visitor to confirm operation within the scope of the home's Statement of Purpose. Whenever possible children's views and comments contribute to this process and help to positively influence the service being provided. A development plan for the home confirms its continued operation; however, it is out of date.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The recorded level of detail in the children's plans, case files and daily recording documents identify that staff are fully aware of the particular cultural and personal needs of the child. In response, they have developed appropriate actions to fully address these personal needs. And enhance the child's understanding of her cultural heritage. Although rurally isolated the home's staff are active in ensuring that the young person experiences as wide a range of social and recreational experiences as possible while shaping behaviour to be tolerant of the difference of other peers.

The home is very well organised administratively. Children's individual case files are stored confidentially yet arranged in a manner that is familiar to the staff team. Children are made aware of the contents of their files and know they can request access to them.

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 development plan for the home is reviewed annually. (national minimum standard 33.5)