

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	16 December 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 small children's home is registered to provide care for up to two young people of either gender, aged between 10 and 18 years. The home's location is within easy reach of the local main town centre and convenient for access to nearby leisure and company educational facilities, while being discretely situated away from neighbouring properties. The home offers spacious accommodation in a four-bedroom detached property where each young person has their own room. The home has two lounges, a large kitchen/dining room, bathrooms on each floor and a staff office. A large garden and detached garage that houses leisure equipment provides additional functional space that enhances the property's suitability as a children's home.

Summary

This was an announced interim inspection. The visit concentrated on the Every Child Matters outcome areas for being healthy, staying safe and organisation. At the time of this visit two young people were living at the home who both declined to contribute to the inspection process.

At the last key inspection the children's home was assessed as satisfactory. Following this inspection the overall judgement remains the same. On this occasion three actions and two good practice recommendations are made that identify some administrative weaknesses associated with recent organisational and resident changes at the home. This judgement will be reviewed at the home's next full inspection when all key national minimum standards will be reassessed.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered manager was asked to ensure that the policy for the disposal of unused medication is adhered to. This has been achieved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

An awareness of healthy eating and the importance of a balanced diet is promoted with young people living at the home. Individual preferences are assimilated into the home's shopping list, menus and mealtime arrangements. Young people are introduced to self-help skills as part of their daily routine. Menu planning is flexible offering a range of dishes including those from different cultures.

The health and welfare needs of young people are addressed by staff following the registered provider's policies and by adapting their practice to meet individual requirements. Young people are registered with local health professionals and staff maintain adequate records of all appointments. First aid arrangements in the home are good with staff receiving regular training that equips them should they have to deal with minor accidents or ailments.

Young people's case files contain important information about their health and medical needs, specifically in their health plan but these are not being kept up-to-date. The records do confirm that young people's health is promoted by staff at the home and that some key aspects of

health education and keeping safe are discussed. The home uses a medication policy which includes appropriate procedures and practice guidance for staff. Medication is stored safely in a lockable cabinet. Compliance with the administration for the disposal of medication has been improved.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's right to privacy is enhanced by having their own lockable bedroom and staff knocking before entering. Promoting confidentiality is practically demonstrated by the collation of sensitive personal information in secure case files and by staff being careful when communicating about young people with parents and other professionals.

Concerns or complaints made by young people living at the home are acted upon appropriately by care staff. Problems are usually effectively addressed before they become a complaint. The home has a clear and effective complaint policy which is summarised in the young person's guide to the home. Young people know to whom they can complain. Young people have access to an independent advocate should they require help or support in making their concerns known. Any external complaints about the home are addressed by the home's manager and registered provider.

The safety and welfare of young people living at the home is promoted by the registered provider's policies. These comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection including countering bullying, effective behaviour management and safeguarding children. By having access to guidance provided by the Local Safeguarding Children Board, staff are able to recognise signs of abuse and how to respond to any child protection concerns. The provider follows national multi-agency policies for young people who absent themselves from the home and ensure that on their return they have the opportunity to discuss the reasons for their absence. Regular staff training is made available by the provider to ensure that young people are looked after by informed and competent staff.

Staff base their management of behaviour on the active encouragement of acceptable behaviour, by providing consistent expectations and by praising positive behaviour. Young people confirm through their improving behaviour that these standards are clearly known. Staff treat the young people as individuals and with respect and this is responded to by good behaviour and a minimal need for the use of sanctions or behavioural controls. Staff are trained in behaviour management which includes the safe use of physical restraint using any approved intervention. The views and opinions of young people are sought as part of this process to improve the transparency and effectiveness of staff practice.

The home demonstrates its awareness of potential dangers to looked after children by producing a range of risk assessments for all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, the risk from fire and hazards, or from young people's behaviour and recreational activities. These assessments are reviewed regularly and take into account daily tasks and any changes affecting the home, such as staffing levels or changes in occupancy. Risk assessment for changes to the complement of the home have recognised the importance of maintaining the stability of young people's placements.

Young people living in the home take fire safety seriously and play a compliant part in responding to fire precautionary drills. Some fire records are, however, incomplete and do not confirm that

all current staff are familiar with the home's precautionary measures. Records confirming the electrical safety of portable equipment in the home are not congruent with contractor's recommendations and the implications of this inaction could place young people at risk.

The home has effective procedures in place for monitoring all visitors. No unauthorised person can access the building or young people living there. Staff personnel files were not available during this inspection as they are held centrally at the company head office. Staff on duty said that practice was safe because no staff started working with children without going through a rigorous selection process or ahead of all statutory checks being completed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home's Statement of Purpose includes the information prescribed by Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations however at this inspection this information was not up to date.

Young people are looked after by a competent staff team who are thoroughly supported by the newly appointed manager to the home. Staff are made accountable for providing good care because importance is placed on regular staff supervision and team meetings to ensure the quality and consistency of day-to-day care. Staff practice is developed by having access to comprehensive policies, procedures and guidance. Staff have attended all statutory training and additional courses to help them provide for young people's particular needs in an individualised manner. Young people currently appear to recognise this by their generally cooperative behaviour and positive relationship with staff.

The staff rota confirms that the complement of the home is sufficient to cover the needs of the young people both individually and when they are together. Any shortfalls are covered by house staff or known staff from other of the provider's children's homes to reduce the potential for disruption to care routines. The arrangements for safe one-to-one work is fully addressed by the home's risk assessments, while remaining subject to constant staff review to ensure everybody's safety.

There is a process to regularly monitor the operational efficiency and quality of care being provided by the home. The content of the in-house monitoring remains generally at a good standard. Independent monthly monitoring takes place through the use of a Regulation 33 visitor to confirm that the home is operating within the scope of its Statement of Purpose. Some key elements, such as compliance with fire precautionary measures, have been missed during the recent staffing and occupancy changes to the home. Feedback from resident young people is enlisted during these visits as this can usefully influence aspects of the service being provided by the home. The future operation of the home is outlined by a development plan.

Young people's individual case files are stored and arranged in a manner that are readily accessible to staff while maintaining confidentiality but are not currently consistent in their content or format. This weakness prevents staff from having access to all relevant information. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and know they can request access to them should they need to.

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
12	ensure that each young person's case file includes an up-to-date health plan (Regulation 20)	31 May 2010
26	complete records that confirm full staff compliance and familiarity with the regularity of fire drills and evacuations (Regulation 32.1(c))	31 May 2010
35	ensure that each young person's case file contains the information detailed in schedule 3 of the Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and that such records are consistent in their format for all residents. (Regulation 28)	31 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- comply with the recommendations for electrical retesting of portable electrical equipment (national minimum standard 26.4)
- ensure that Regulation 33 checks fully review compliance with the home's fire precautionary measures (national minimum standard 33.2)