

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC378407
Inspection date	17 September 2009
Inspector	Shaun Common
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 October 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

The children's home provides accommodation for one young person of either sex aged from 10 years to under 17 years of age. The home is in a private housing estate and is similar to other properties in the area. It has three bedrooms. One bedroom is dedicated for a young person, another is a sleep-in room for staff and the third bedroom is currently spare. There is access to local bus routes, and a health centre is a short journey away as are shops and local amenities. The home has a fitted kitchen, a bathroom, a separate toilet, an office area and gardens to the front and rear of the property.

One young person lives at the home and was present at the inspection.

Summary

This unannounced inspection looked at all key standards and examined all outcome areas.

This children's home is a satisfactory service. It has some strengths in the way it manages medication, privacy afforded to young people and in external monitoring processes. Improvement is required in a number of areas, such as information about the home, clarity in care plans, recording outcomes and asking parents views of plans as well as complaints information provided for young people. Improvement is needed in records, such as risk assessments and checks on new staff as well as in staff training. It also needs to improve in formally consulting parents and placing authorities about care provided and the conduct and operation of the home as well as in ensuring all staff undertake a fire drill.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Persons were asked at the last inspection to make a number of improvements. They were asked to revise information about the home, improve some records and revise some procedures, provide holistic care plans and ensure review outcomes are recorded. They were asked to check the identity of visitors, provide formal staff support and ensure external visits take place as required as well as robust risk assessments being devised. They were asked to ensure young people have someone independent of the home they can contact and that consent for first aid and non-prescribed medication is in place. These matters have been completed and help to keep young people safe, protect their rights, that they have a good record of their care and have information about the home and its procedures.

The Registered Persons were also asked to ensure that the Statement of Purpose is consistent with its conditions of registration, food provided to young people is appropriate to their needs, the home is well decorated and maintained and all staff have completed fire drills. They were also asked to ensure staff have completed essential training, are subject to the satisfactory completion of a probation period, that robust monitoring takes place by the Registered Manager and the medication policy is revised. These matters have not been completed and actions and recommendations will be raised in this report regarding these matters.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The standard of food provided for young people is poor. Planned menus show what is on offer and what is actually eaten so diet can be monitored, however the menu does not demonstrate healthy, balanced and nutritious meals.

The home has a policy on health promotion, which assists staff to support young people. Young people's assessed health needs are identified in health plans, though some issues lack clarity. For example, file information states there are certain health issues to be considered, however the home's plan states these issues do not need consideration. The home's plan does not evaluate whether these needs have been met or ongoing progress. Young people have access to educational information on health matters, such as substance misuse and sexual health matters.

Medication is stored securely, which helps to keep young people safe. Medication is recorded and administered as required, which helps to keep young people healthy. There is consent for young people for the administration of first aid and over the counter medication. This ensures young people's health is fully promoted and the risk of adverse reaction to any treatments used is minimised. There is a policy regarding the management of medication, however this has not been revised to determine to all staff the way the home provides suitable and hygienic storage for all medications and that this does not involve storage alongside other items that are not medicines.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with access to a telephone to stay in touch with people who are important to them. Their information is stored safely and securely. Young people are afforded privacy. The home has a revised policy and a record for the purpose about searching young people's possessions in the interests of their health, safety and welfare.

Information about complaints is available to young people and provided to them on admission, however it does not provide them with sufficient and full information. They do however, have access to a system that promotes and protects their rights. The home has a complaints procedure that is understood by staff, however, not all staff have received training to help them better support young people. A record is in place for any complaints that are made.

A copy of the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures and the home's own child protection procedure are accessible to staff in the home. Staff have a satisfactory understanding of the procedures and action that needs to be taken to protect a child, if there were an allegation or suspicion of abuse. Staff have all received training in child protection and associated procedures, which helps them to keep young people safe.

The home has a policy and procedure regarding countering bullying, which is accessible to staff to help them protect young people. The home has a procedure for dealing with absence of any young person without authority. However, this does not address how the young person will be seen by someone independent of the home when they return to consider why they were absent and ensure all is well. Staff understand the procedure and this assists them to safeguard young people. The home has a record for the purpose of recording any such incidents.

Relationships between staff and young people are positive. There have been no sanctions or restraints at the home since the last inspection, though there are records for the purpose which are set out as required.

Risk assessments that relate to young people's known and likely activities are in place and help to safeguard them. However, the home's records do not identify the likelihood or severity in these risk assessments, so appropriate control measures can be put in place to fully reduce or eliminate any risk. The premises risk assessment is not clear in all cases as to what the presenting risk is in order that measures are put in place to address this. Not all staff have undertaken a fire drill in the last six months, in order that they know what to do to keep themselves and young people safe. Other health and safety matters have been undertaken and help to keep young people safe, such as regular checks and maintenance are carried out on the gas boiler, portable electrical appliances and fire equipment and a fire risk assessment is in place and is up-to-date.

Staff files examined demonstrate that a robust recruitment process has not always been followed in order to ensure new employees are the right people to work with children. Three files did not have full employment histories and one did not have a reference from the most recent employer.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with satisfactory support. There is evidence of individual support via key working sessions, however broader issues of support through provision of appropriate health, social and sexual health information and education is not well evidenced or evaluated in care planning. Young people can approach any staff member for support, advice and guidance and have access to someone independent of the home and their placing authority.

Young people are supported and encouraged by staff to engage in education and attain their potential. Support and advice is also provided regarding further education and career choices. Care planning shows some support young people need and what the aims and objectives are but is limited in recording outcomes achieved.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Care plans are in place for young people and determine most of their assessed needs and how these will be met on a day-to-day basis; however, there is no clear link from all objectives to recorded or evidenced outcomes. Contact arrangements are recorded and in place and contact events evidence young people are enabled to keep touch with people important to them should they choose to do so.

Statutory looked after reviews of young people's care plans have been undertaken within timescales. Young people are invited to their reviews or have an advocate who represents their views on their behalf.

The home has satisfactory information for young people about introduction to the home and the home has policies and procedures for staff to follow to assist young people in this transition.

Young people can give their views on day-to-day matters to staff and through formal key work sessions. Consultation with parents and placing social workers about the care provided and the operation of the home is not formally carried out to help improve the home's services to young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

No clear plan has been provided by the local authority for a young person's transition to adulthood, whether that be to independent living or whether additional support or further services will be required. A looked after review is to be held shortly to clarify the plan. The home therefore also has no clear plan. There is evidence that basic tasks such as encouragement to learn cooking skills, ironing and cleaning are carried out but nothing clear or comprehensive in line with the Children (Leaving Care) Act.

The children's home provides a satisfactory environment conducive to the care of young people. Areas of the home are beginning to show wear and tear and are in need of attention, such as floor coverings and décor throughout and a cupboard door and drawer fronts in the kitchen.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

There is satisfactory information provided in the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide about the home and the services it provides. The Statement of Purpose contains a range of information, however does not include staff experience, skills and qualifications regarding the range of needs the home states it can meet and lacks some clarity of the range of needs the home can meet considering staff experience, training, skills and qualifications. The Children's Guide provides good information about some of the services provided and matters relating to equality and diversity, however some of the language used may not afford clear understanding to children and is not always positive. For example, the section about working with staff is about rules and potential sanctions and not positive relationships.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The home has assessed the individual needs of young people in areas such as culture, religion and equality, however planning and evidence is limited in how these matters are addressed. There is information via the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide about equality and diversity matters. Matters that promote fairness, such as access to the complaints system and behaviour management are satisfactory.

Staff are provided with good formal support to ensure they deliver positive care to young people. Some staff are experienced; however, some lack experience, but do understand the needs of young people and have a satisfactory understanding of the policies and procedures of the home. Staff have not had all required essential training to support and enable them to deliver good, safe care to young people.

External monitoring of the home in the form of visits under Regulation 33 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 are carried out each month and are thorough. Internal monitoring of the home takes place each month as required; all matters are recorded as being monitored, however, it is not always identified where there are shortfalls in order to improve provision for young people. For example, there are shortfalls in planned menus, staff recruitment records,

risk assessments and fire drills. The reports do not comment on the quality of matters monitored or consider the views of young people, parents and placing authorities.

Young people's files do have shortfalls, however this information has been formally requested from placing authorities so young people have a full history of their care.

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
1	revise the Statement of Purpose to contain accurately all matters listed in Schedule 1; in particular paragraphs 8(c) and 9 of that Schedule; revise the Children's Guide to contain the matters in Regulations 4(3)(b) and 4(4) (Regulations 4 and 5)	30 October 2009
10	ensure young people accommodated are provided with food that is wholesome and nutritious and suitable for their needs (Regulation 13)	5 October 2009
24	ensure all parts of the children's home are kept in good repair internally and are reasonably decorated and maintained (Regulation 31)	30 November 2009
26	ensure by means of fire drills and practices that all persons working at the home are aware of the procedure to be followed in case of fire (Regulation 32)	5 October 2009
26	ensure unnecessary risks to the health and safety of young people are identified and so far as possible eliminated; specifically through revising the premises risk assessment to identify specific risks and action to be taken to reduce, eliminate or avoid those risks (Regulation 23)	5 October 2009
27	obtain for all staff, all the information set out in Regulation 26 (Regulation 26)	5 October 2009
31	ensure that all staff receive appropriate training in fire safety, complaints and equality and diversity; provide evidence of all training undertaken (Regulation 27)	30 November 2009
31	ensure that all permanent appointments are subject to the satisfactory completion of a period of probation; provide evidence on individuals files that this is the case for all employees (Regulation 27)	30 October 2009
33	ensure the matters set out in Schedule 6 are robustly monitored each month with any shortfalls being identified as well as action to be taken to improve provision to children; ensure the	30 September 2009

	monitoring system provides for specific consultation with children, parents and placing authorities about the matters in the schedule and comments on the quality of those matters (Regulation 34).	
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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):

- revise and implement the medication policy to ensure the home provides suitable and hygienic storage for all medications that does not involve storage alongside other items that are not medicines (NMS 13)
- revise the complaints procedure and information provided to children to include a summary of the matters set out in NMS 16 (NMS 16)
- revise the absence without authority procedure so it considers the matter set out in NMS 19.4 (NMS 19)
- revise risk assessments to include a measure of likelihood and severity (NMS 26)
- seek the views of parents of children accommodated on the content and implementation of placement plans (NMS 2)
- seek the views and opinions of parents and placing social workers on a regular basis about the matters set out in NMS 8 (NMS 8).