

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC381085
Inspection date	21 September 2009
Inspector	Janet Manders
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	24 February 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

The home is a semi-detached property registered for two young people, aged between eight and under 18 on admission, who have emotional and or behavioural difficulties. It was registered in September 2008 and is operated by the local authority; it has the benefit of being indistinguishable from its neighbours. The home is located on a quiet road in a suburban area a short walk from local amenities and bus routes to the city centre. It has front and back gardens, is not overlooked, and has a large grassed area opposite.

Summary

This was an unannounced full inspection, which looked at key standards of the children's homes national minimum standards (NMS). The inspection focused on areas related to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection also concentrated on how the home consults with young people, plans for their care and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the service.

Overall, the home provides a good standard of care for young people. The physical and emotional health needs of the young people are effectively met and young people's education is valued. Staff work hard to keep young people safe. However, not all staff have completed appropriate safeguarding training. In addition, staff have not always developed behaviour management plans for the young people. This could lead to inconsistent practice in dealing with young people. Young people are well supported at the time of their admission to the home and their individual needs are assessed and met. Young people's views are valued by the staff.

Staff are supported well by the manager, who has a strong commitment and focus on improvement, although team meetings and staff supervision do not take place as frequently as required to fully enable staff to reflect on the care they provide to young people.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The home has continued to make improvements in its operation. The last inspection in February 2009 made four good practice recommendations. These included discouraging young people from smoking, encouraging young people to partake in leisure activities, developing a detailed placement plan and updating the home's Statement of Purpose. The home has taken appropriate action to address these issues.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good support to live a healthy lifestyle; their health needs are effectively met.

Young people are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and staff encourage them to be physically active. Young people are involved with planning the daily menus and use this as a positive learning experience to learn about different foods. Young people, dependent on age and development are encouraged to plan, shop and prepare their own meals.

Young people's health needs are clearly identified in the placement plan and good records are kept to show how these are addressed. All young people are registered with the required health professionals when they are admitted to the home. Staff record and monitor young people's health appointments, this ensures that all healthcare checks are being monitored and reviewed. Staff work closely with the Looked After Children's (LAC) Nurse and other health professionals to ensure that young people's identified health needs are addressed. Staff regularly discuss health issues with young people. Young people are discouraged from smoking, alcohol abuse and illicit drug misuse. This helps prepare young people to be more informed about how to lead healthy and safe lives.

Young people's medication is safely managed at the home. The files for the young people contain signed medical consent forms. Staff ensure that medication is stored, accessed and disposed of safely. Young people's medication is safely stored in a wall-mounted lockable cabinet in a secured room which is also locked when not occupied. Young people are further protected because staff receive suitable, appropriate training and information to manage medication properly as part of their duties. This ensures that young people's health needs are appropriately addressed and promoted.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people live in a home where staff understand their role and responsibilities for keeping young people safe. Safeguarding procedures are in place; staff are trained and are aware of what to do if they are concerned about a young person's safety or protection.

Young people's privacy is respected and information about them is confidentially handled. Bedrooms are considered private space and staff do not enter young people's rooms without permission, except when young people are considered at risk. Policies and procedures are in place for room searches if required, which are conducted in the presence of the young person concerned. Young people's records are securely stored to maintain confidentiality and young people have access to a telephone, which allows private conversation when this is an agreed part of their placement plan.

The home has good systems in place for managing complaints. Young people know how to complain and feel that they are listened to and taken seriously. Each young person's right to complain is supported by the staff team. In addition, young people have access to an independent advocate if they require extra support.

The home has clear procedures for responding to child protection concerns and all staff have initial training in child protection which is regularly updated. However, whilst all staff have undertaken basic training regarding safeguarding young people as part of their induction, some members of staff have not completed the authority's on-line safeguarding training. Staff monitor all visitors to the home who are required to provide evidence of their identity and sign a visitors' book; this ensures young people are not being exposed to potential risks.

Young people live in a caring, friendly and safe environment. Staff work actively in the home to ensure that bullying does not happen. Young people are well educated about the detrimental effects bullying behaviours have. They are clear about the home's policy on bullying.

The home has a written policy and staff guidance on the action that should be taken if a young person is absent from the home without consent. The procedure and guidance follow a regional joint protocol, which has been developed to ensure young people's safety is promoted. Where young people are missing from the home, staff make strenuous efforts to ensure the young person's safety, following the plan agreed with the placing social worker and police as to what action should be taken.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people are clearly informed of the home's expectations of them and any action that will be taken if behaviour is unacceptable. Discussion of the house rules takes place at the time of a young person's admission and information is contained in the children's guide. Young people are treated as individuals and are offered plenty of praise and encouragement. Staff endeavour to de-escalate situations and deal with incidents in a calm manner, encouraging young people to display appropriate behaviours and to move forward using positive rewards. Sanctions are used sparingly and usually involve young people paying for breakages. All staff are appropriately trained in managing challenging behaviour. Physical interventions have been used to defuse potentially dangerous situations and prevent injury to others. Appropriate records are maintained in respect of restraints and sanctions used within the home. However, the staff have not always completed a behaviour management plan regarding young people. This is contrary to the authority's policies and has the potential for resulting in inconsistent practice, if there are not agreed practices between all staff members.

Staff are pro-active in taking steps to ensure that young people, staff and visitors are safe from fire and other hazards in the home. Frequent checks are undertaken on fire equipment, emergency lighting and fire drills are regularly undertaken. The home undertakes comprehensive risk assessments in relation to all aspects of the safety of the premises and grounds, including a fire risk assessment. Risk assessments are also undertaken regarding the potential behaviour of young people and their activities.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are supported by a well-informed team who work together to identify and meet young people's needs.

Staff are able to focus on the different needs of each young person because there are individual placement plans that detail the aims of each placement and the actions associated with successful outcomes for each young person. All staff are aware of the young people's placement plan and offer appropriate support when necessary. Young people receive appropriate external support as the home has a proactive approach to working with other professionals.

The educational progress of young people is actively supported by the staff. Young people are supported to maintain their educational placements so that the disruption to their education is minimised. Staff maintain good links with schools to ensure that there is positive communication between the school and the home, including providing additional support to young people within the school setting. This enables young people to receive the appropriate support to reach their potential. Young people who are not in education are encouraged and supported to return to education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are encouraged to be actively involved in the planning of their care and the running of the home. Staff are well informed about young people's needs so that they are able to provide appropriate individualised care.

Each young person has an up-to-date placement plan that identifies their current needs. The plans provide key information to staff about important areas of need as well as guidance on how to meet the requirements identified. These plans are working documents and are updated on a regular basis. Young people are able to contribute to their plan of care as they are included and involved in formal review meetings with their social workers and other professionals. This enables young people to influence plans for their future.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with their family, friends and other significant people, where there are no restrictions. Arrangements for contact are clearly recorded at the time of admission to the home and updated where the plan has changed; staff record the impact of contact on the young people. Young people can have their families and friends to visit them at the home. Where necessary staff provide transport for young people to maintain contact with their families.

The home has in place guidelines and procedures for introducing a new young person. They are given a copy of the young person's guide on arrival which explains the rules and boundaries of the placement, introduces the staff team and explains generally how the home is run. Staff are sensitive and give young people time to help them settle into their new environment. As a result, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The location of the home is convenient for schools, leisure facilities, transport and other community facilities that are important for the full development of the young people. The accommodation is domestic in style, homely and decorated, maintained and furnished to a good standard. Each young person has their own bedroom which they are encouraged to personalise.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Young people receive good support to enable their needs to be addressed whilst living at the home as the home is well organised and staff are well trained.

Young people, parents and social workers have access to a good range of information detailing the home's operation and its services. Both the Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide are regularly reviewed to ensure all information is up-to-date. The children's guide provides clear information about the rules of the home. The home has a set of comprehensive policies and procedures to guide the staff in their work with the young people.

Staff are well supported by the manager and other senior staff within the authority. Most staff receive supervision from a senior member of staff each month, which supports them to undertake

their roles and increase their knowledge and competence. However, some staff do not have the opportunity to have regular supervision and this has the potential for undermining their ability to provide informed support for the young people placed at the home. This is further undermined as the team has not met to discuss the operation of the home and the care of young people since April.

Young people receive good levels of supervision and support. This is because the staffing rotas are well organised and the home is adequately staffed. The staffing group is small and young people benefit because the quality of care is consistent. There is a good mix of gender and background within the staff team to promote young people's identity and well-being. The home has in place a good programme for staff training and continual professional development.

The manager undertakes regular monitoring of all files and records as required. Young people's feedback contributes to this process and helps to positively influence the operation of the home. The home's records are of a good standard and evidence the participation of young people. They support the work of the home and provide a comprehensive record of young people's time at the home. This assists with future placement planning. Young people's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The home operates in a way that demonstrates a clear recognition of the varied and different needs young people have. Each young person has a plan of care in place that fully identifies each individual's needs in terms of their ethnicity, race, religion, culture, gender, disability and language. Awareness and knowledge has been further improved in this area because staff have received training in relation to equality and diversity.

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):

- ensure that all staff undertake ongoing training in respect of safeguarding young people, with specific reference to completing the authority's on-line training. (NMS 17.8)
- ensure that the consequences of unacceptable behaviour are clear to staff and children, with specific reference to developing a clear behaviour management plan for all young people. (NMS 22.4)
- ensure all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff each month. (NMS 28.2)
- arrange for monthly team meetings to take place. (NMS 28.10).