

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stella Henderson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	5 March 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 home is purpose built and provides accommodation for up to six young people of either sex from 10 years old up to 17 years old at any one time. The home is detached and is suitably adapted to meet the needs, if these arise, of young people with a disability.

The ground floor has a lounge, a computer room with internet access, a dining room and a kitchen. The first floor consists of young people's bedrooms and a staff sleep-in room. Bathrooms and toilets are located on both floors. Off road parking is available for up to six vehicles. The home is close to local transport routes and local amenities.

Summary

This key inspection was unannounced and requirements from the previous inspection were checked for compliance. In addition to this, key standards for outcome areas of Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Well-being and Organisation were inspected in line with the national minimum standards for children's homes.

The inspection highlighted several areas of satisfactory and good practice. Young people benefit from personalised assessment and care planning. The home is effective in promoting good health and education. Any child protection concerns are promptly referred to the appropriate authorities and there is regular consultation with young people.

However, there are significant weaknesses relating to Staying Safe and Organisation. New staff are inadequately vetted and those that do pass scrutiny are not properly supported, being left alone on duty without the supervision of more experienced staff. New staff do not receive induction training within reasonable timescales. Although fairly robust, Regulation 33 and 34 audits have not been sufficiently rigorous to identify the shortfalls identified in this inspection report.

The provider took prompt and appropriate action during the inspection to respond to these concerns and has outlined an action plan in anticipation of this report.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the Registered Person was required to take action with regard to amending the statement of purpose, ensuring staff are trained in first aid and receive other mandatory training. Additional requirements were also made with regard to notifications, frequency of supervision and security of information.

Evidence from this inspection demonstrates that the majority of these actions have been met. Staff are now trained in first aid and supervision is undertaken within recommended timescales. Information on children and young people is secure.

However, there are still some shortfalls which require attention. Induction training has not been completed by new staff and another action has been raised in respect of this. Amendments were made as required to the statement of purpose, however this document does not yet reflect

changes to staffing. The home has improved practice with regard to informing Ofsted of notifiable incidents, although on one occasion this was not completed. As there is no direct impact on children and young people, recommendations are raised in respect of these two standards.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The home successfully promotes the health needs of the young people. Each young person has a comprehensive health plan, which clearly outlines their personalised health needs. There is effective intervention and support from the looked after children's nurse and staff support young people to attend doctor's, dental and optician's checks as appropriate.

Young people are advised on aspects of healthy living, covering a wide range of topics, such as sexual health, smoking and the use of drink and drugs. Where specific needs are identified, staff ensure that young people are referred to appropriate specialist services. Staff receive first aid training and a first aid box is to hand.

The home provides reasonably healthy, balanced diets including fresh fruit and vegetables. Young people are consulted about their preferences, although some young people are of an age where they make their own decisions about what to eat, as part of their preparation for independence. Although there is some inconsistency in recording, the manager is generally able to get an overview of dietary intake as staff document exactly what young people are eating.

Young people are safeguarded with regard to the administration of medication. All medication is safely stored in a locked cabinet and any medication dispensed is fully recorded and there are suitable procedures in place for the disposal of medicines.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

There are some elements of good practice which safeguards young people. Feedback from external stakeholders and young people indicates that staff are good at communicating with young people and other professionals and that they work well to secure positive outcomes and to keep young people safe. Staff are alert to the possibility of child exploitation and invoke the appropriate child protection procedures when required.

Young people are also protected because staff check the identity of visitors. Their privacy and dignity is respected, as there are suitable arrangements for the use of the bathroom and information kept on file is stored in a secure cabinet.

Episodes of absconding are dealt with sensitively and safely and there is suitable procedure for dealing with complaints. Sanctions are reasonable and appropriately administered. Bullying is an issue at the home, but young people who are bullied are supported and young people who bully others are given suitable guidance. A children's rights officer has been invited to the home to help with this problem. Young people are protected from hazards both within and outside the home through the use of comprehensive risk assessments and action plans to minimise such risks.

However, there are several areas of practice that are inadequate. Young people's right to privacy and confidentiality is undermined in two respects. Confidential discussions between staff and young people are recorded in documentation to which all young people have access and room searches have not been carried out in accordance with these regulations and standards.

Young people's safety is compromised as the recording of the duration of restraint is in some cases inaccurate. This means that it is hard to distinguish whether young people have been subject to excessive restraint. Although there have been improvements to practice with regard to notifying Ofsted of events outlined under Schedule 5, there is still some inconsistency in reporting procedures.

There are significant shortfalls with regard to recruitment and vetting procedures, which are not sufficiently robust to ensure that young people are safeguarded. Internal systems to quality assure this process are not in place, which means that young people are at risk from those who are unsuitable to work at the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people benefit from the guidance and support provided by staff to meet their needs. For example, each young person has an individual development plan entitled 'My Life Book', which is based on assessments and information from a variety of sources. This addresses how emotional, social and personal support will be provided and is compiled in consultation with young people and clearly demonstrates how the diverse needs of young people are to be met.

The home actively promotes the education of young people. Staff work in partnership with the organisation's educational development officer, to ensure that educational provision that meets the needs of individual young people is arranged. Where necessary, staff effectively represent and advocate on behalf of young people in order to secure appropriate educational provision. Young people have the opportunity to engage in a variety of leisure activities, including holidays away from the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good quality placement plans which reflect their individually assessed needs and preferences. The progress and development of young people is regularly appraised through the home's own monitoring systems and statutory review processes.

The views of young people on what they need are taken into account. There is good consultation with young people, who are supported to express their views on the running of the home and on decisions that affect their day to day lives and long term future. Young people are encouraged by the home to have appropriate contact with family and friends in order to retain ties with family and their local community. Staff give practical support to make such contact possible and to monitor the quality of such contacts.

There are procedures in place to support young people to move into and to leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. The home takes emergency placements and where this has occurred this has been effectively managed, in order to safeguard young people and provide them with a place of safety.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Despite the absence of formal pathway plans provided by the local authority, young people receive suitable support from staff in order to prepare for the move to independence and adulthood. The usual tasks of learning how to plan for and prepare meals and dealing with laundry and cleaning rooms are incorporated into placement plans. Young people are supported to attend interviews for employment or college.

The home is institutional in size and design, which makes it difficult to adequately supervise young people, particularly where incidents of bullying are concerned. However, efforts have been made to make the property homely for young people. All young people have their own individual bedrooms, which they can personalise to their own tastes and there are suitable bathroom facilities. Both the interior and exterior of the home are maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

Management of the home is inadequate. Staffing levels are insufficient. Members of staff who do not have substantial experience of working in the home and who have not completed their induction and probationary periods are on duty without the support of more experienced members of staff.

There is reasonable support for staff through timely supervision, team meetings and training. The majority of staff have now achieved appropriate vocational qualifications and a range of relevant training is available. New staff have not received induction training within suitable timescales however, which means that young people are looked after by staff who are not equipped to respond to their needs.

The auditing of practice and procedure under Regulations 33 and 34 are not sufficiently rigorous to improve practice and safeguard young people. Although such reports are fairly comprehensive, they have not identified the shortfalls around the recording of restraint, staff recruitment records and required checks for new workers at the home, notifications of events listed under Schedule 5 and duty rosters of persons working at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is evidence of effective, detailed and personalised planning for each young person, which takes into account their diverse requirements across a range of identified needs. Staff are good at planning to meet these needs and to implement care plans accordingly. Young people are provided with a range of diverse role models in terms of the composition of the staff team and other professionals they come into contact with.

Young people's records are maintained well and ensure they have an accurate record of their needs and progress. The home has developed a suitable statement of purpose and children's guide. This information enables young people, parents and professionals to have a clear understanding of the services to be provided, although this document has not been updated to reflect changes in the staff team.

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
9	conduct the home in a manner which respects the privacy and dignity of children accommodated there (Regulation 11 (2) (a)).	17 September 2009
22	record, in the case of any form of restraint, the duration of the restraint (Regulation 22.9 (4)(d))	17 September 2009
27	ensure that people employed by the home meet the criteria set out by this regulation, with specific reference to paragraph 26 (3) (Regulation 26)	17 September 2009
30	ensure there is at all times a sufficient number of suitably qualified, competent and experienced persons working at the home (Regulation 25)	3 September 2009
31	ensure that all persons employed receive appropriate training (Regulation 27 (4)(a)).	17 September 2009
33	monitor the matters set out in Schedule 6 (Regulation 34).	17 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- notify the appropriate authorities of significant events as outlined in Schedule 5 (NMS 20.1).
- amend the statement of purpose to reflect changes to the staff team (NMS 1)
- ensure that checks are made on the use of restraint (NMS 32.2).