

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Norma Welsby
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Date of last inspection	23 December 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

This children's home is a detached house, domestic in character and situation in a busy residential area. The home is registered for three children and young people between the ages of 10 years and 17 years of age. As well as long stay placements, the service also provides one respite place.

The location of the home provides good access to a wide range of community facilities. Young people have their own bedroom and access to good standard of communal space and outdoor gardens and equipment.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key national minimum standards (NMS) were examined. This is a good service, with some outstanding features. Young people benefit from their placement at this children's home, which provides a secure and nurturing environment. Social workers involved with placing young people at the service, describe it as 'child-centred and positive' and that they would use the service again 'without any reservations'. The home is well managed and the staff team work well together and are very motivated to enabling young people achieve excellent outcomes from their placement. Senior staff are working to address shortfalls in some aspects of recording and documentation which will further enhance the quality of this service.

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 interim inspection in November 2008, there were no actions or recommendations.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The service promotes healthy lifestyles for young people and achieves this to a good standard.

Young people are encouraged to develop a range of skills that enables them to plan and prepare their own meals. Staff support young people to make healthy choices and to develop healthy routines. Young people feel confident and skilled in this area, which is excellent preparation for independence.

Staff thoroughly assess the health needs of young people and ensure that appropriate health support is accessed that meets their diverse needs. Detailed health care records are in place. Young people are encouraged to develop their knowledge and personal responsibility for their health and wellbeing. All staff are provided with first aid training and staffing rotas ensure that there is always a first aid member of staff on duty.

Medication is satisfactorily managed. Staff have received training, correct records are maintained and there is a suitable central medication cabinet. Currently young people do not have the opportunity to self medicate while residing at the home, but this is an important area for development to enable young people to be more independent.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

There are policies and procedures in place to ensure that young people are safe, and staff are thorough and competent in their practices.

Staff promote the privacy of young people well. They are very respectful of young people's need for personal space and their right to have personal information confidentially handled. Staff treat young people as individuals and recognise the differing needs of each young person, in respect of, for example, age, gender and health needs. Young people are able to lock their bedroom doors and have a personal safe. Staff speak about young people in a caring and respectful way. These values are instilled in young people, so that they learn mutual respect and tolerance and this is judged to be an outstanding feature of this home.

The service has an established and thorough complaints procedure accessible to young people, their families and professionals. Young people know how to complain and feel confident that staff will respond appropriately to their concerns. Young people are very confident and articulate in their communication and staff are very attentive, which means that any issues that young people raise are managed well.

Child protection procedures are in place and staff have young people's safety and welfare as their priority. Staff have had appropriate training and have access to written procedures. The home has very good links with the local safeguarding team. Staff use key worker sessions and one to one discussions with young people to reiterate the importance of staying safe and healthy and how young people can develop their personal responsibility, especially during unsupervised free time.

Staff are aware of the home's policy to counter bullying. Young people are aware that bullying is not acceptable. Staff promote positive role models and encourage young people to manage difficult situations in a mature and considered way.

The service has appropriate systems in place to protect young people should they go missing from home, including individual protocols. Staff are very open with young people about the procedures they need to follow if this occurs and young people benefit from having this awareness. However, there have been no such incidents since the last inspection.

Young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour through clear and consistent staff guidance. Staff receive regular training in positive handling strategies during their training programme, taking care and taking control. Staff and young people enjoy a very good rapport and their relationships are built on honesty and mutual respect. Staff also encourage and assist young people to enjoy positive relationships with their family and peers.

The home environment is well maintained. Routine health and safety checks and risk assessments are carried out. For example, comprehensive fire safety procedures are in place including regular fire drills in which both staff and young people participate. However, these records do not distinguish whether participants are staff or young people. Several staff drive the house car to transport young people regularly. Despite company policy, to date staff have not been assessed as suitable and competent to have this responsibility.

Comprehensive staff recruitment procedures, including clearance checks, are followed with all checks having to be in place before a new member of staff starts working with young people. Main staff files are kept at the north west regional office, but the house also holds some staff recruitment details. These records are not detailed enough to fully evidence that comprehensive safe recruiting and vetting of all staff has taken place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent support to develop skills and confidence in a range of social, domestic and learning settings.

Staff provide young people with highly personalised support which meets their assessed needs and promotes their confidence and personal skills. This is important in enabling young people to prepare for their future and independence. Young people are committed to achieving the objectives of the placement plan and ensuring that they achieve maximum benefit from their placement. Young people are very positive about their placement at this home and recognise how well they are doing and feel confident about their future. One young person described the placement as 'fantastic' and 'I have everything I need to do well'.

Young people are encouraged to access a diverse range of external educational resources, as well as receiving support from the company's own tutors. All staff support young people in their education and training and are very proud of the progress and achievements of the young people.

The home provides young people with excellent opportunities to take part in a variety of planned activities as well as having free time to spend at home and with friends. Staff encourage young people to form and maintain positive friendships with other young people that they meet at college. Young people are also encouraged to develop specific skills which will continue to benefit them in their future, such as using public transport independently and having driving lessons.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Young people make a positive contribution and are achieving excellent outcomes from their placement at this service. Young people directly commented that they are very satisfied with their placement and feel that it is the best opportunity they could have.

Each young person has their needs comprehensively assessed and has a detailed placement plan. Staff consult with young people and involve them in determining their specific objectives. Placement plans and risk assessments are reviewed very regularly and young people are routinely involved, often adding their own written comments. Risk assessment records are not signed and dated each time senior staff review them. Key worker sessions and one to one sessions are held frequently, providing good records which evidence both sensitive and constructive support and a diversity of subject areas. Staff are not provided with written guidelines to inform the detail of their discussion and ensure that accurate and consistent information is shared with young people.

Staff co-ordinate and facilitate regular contact with families. Staff also support young people to maintain positive relationships and learn how to respond in a mature and respectful way should any difficulties occur.

Staff are very skilled in engaging young people to participate in making choices and personal decisions. The staff team provides a good mix and diversity of age and gender and staff work hard to provide positive role models. Young people's meetings, key worker sessions and one to ones, are held very regularly and young people directly confirmed that they can speak with staff openly and at any time. Each young person has a social worker who is very involved in their placement and young people can also access an independent advocate, if needed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is outstanding.

Young people are given a range of opportunities to enable them to achieve economic wellbeing. Staff are very mindful of their responsibilities to work positively with young people throughout their placement to enable them to develop key skills, to achieve their potential and to prepare for adulthood.

Young people benefit from staff working positively with them and this helps them develop their confidence and self esteem. Each young person is working towards independence, via their weekly planners, developing key skills including budgeting, domestic skills and learning to drive a car.

Young people benefit from a domestic and homely environment. Each young person has their own single bedroom, which is well decorated and personalised. Young people are very involved in choosing their own accessories and themes. Communal areas are comfortable, spacious and domestic in style. There is plentiful outdoor space that enables young people to relax or enjoy activities such as trampolining, badminton and football. Young people also access a good range of community facilities within walking distance and in the nearby town.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This is a well managed service, providing a positive and nurturing environment that achieves excellent outcomes for young people. The manager and staff team are committed to providing a quality service, that is young person-centred.

The promotion of equality and diversity is judged as good. Detailed placement plans and strong team working ensure that individual needs are identified and met appropriately. The service employs a good mix of staff and provides positive role models. The organisation supports staff to achieve relevant qualifications, including skills for life, which aims to improve adult numeracy and literacy. Staff work effectively with young people to establish good values such as respect, tolerance and a celebration of diversity. Evidence supports the service's commitment to further improving equality and diversity in practice to enhance outcomes for young people.

The statement of purpose has recently been updated. While this is a very comprehensive document, it does not explicitly describe the service's respite facility. When young people arrive at the home, they are given written information, which includes details about bullying and how to make a complaint.

Young people benefit from being supported by a staff team that is experienced, competent and qualified to meet their needs. Staff are confident in their practices and work exceptionally well together as a team. There is always a designated senior on duty. The Registered Manager has completed a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 4 and the Registered Manager's Award. Nearly 50 per cent of staff have achieved NVQ at level 3, while the majority of other staff have nearly completed and the remaining member of the team is due to commence registration.

Staff receive regular supervision and attend team meetings. They feel well managed and supported. There is an ongoing training programme providing staff with regular opportunities to refresh their knowledge and learn new skills. Specialist training is provided to enable staff to meet individual needs.

A key worker system is in place and works well. Staff are deployed flexibly to meet individual needs and risk assessments determine staffing levels. Staff absences are mainly covered from within the team and this provides young people with a good degree of consistency.

Comprehensive monthly monitoring and auditing of the service is carried out and contributes to the ongoing evaluation and development of the service.

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
27	ensure that all appropriate information in respect of safe recruiting and vetting of staff is obtained, maintained on file and available for inspection (Regulation 25, 26 and 27, NMS 27)	14 August 2009
1	include in the statement of purpose specific reference to the home's respite service (Regulation 4, NMS 1)	14 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- initiate procedures to enable young people to self medicate and safely store prescribed medication within their bedrooms (NMS 13)
- record and distinguish staff and young person names in fire drill records (NMS 26)
- ensure all staff with responsibility for driving young people in the home's car have been assessed as suitable and competent (NMS 26)
- provide staff with written guidance in respect of the diverse areas covered during key worker and one-to-one sessions, to ensure that young people are provided with accurate and consistent information (NMS 7)

- ensure that young person's risk assessments are signed and dated each time they are reviewed (NMS 7 & 2).