

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	16 June 2009
Inspector	Trevor Shirley
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	13 January 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 managed by a local Limited Company, who also manage other services within the area. The home is registered to provide accommodation for young people of either sex, between the ages of eight to 17 years. The category of registration is for young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties. The home receives countrywide referrals for admission, though most young people have connections with the north west of England. The home's statement of purpose includes emergency admission and a staffing/child ratio of one to one is generally provided.

The home is situated within walking distance of the town centre. The local area is well served by public transport. There is good access to local amenities including schools, shopping and leisure facilities. The home is a well maintained two bedroom, two storey, mid-terrace property. The lounge, dining room, kitchen and bathroom are on the ground floor, whilst there are two bedrooms on the first floor. The smaller of the two bedrooms serves as a staff office sleeping-in room facility. Young people have their own bedroom. The bathroom is a shared facility between staff and the young people. There is a yard/patio area at the back of the house which is paved and concrete. The house has recently undergone a comprehensive modernisation and improvement programme, and now presents as a homely and comfortably furnished environment. The property has also been inspected by the local Fire Safety Officer and Environmental Health Service Office, and all recommended works have been completed.

Summary

At this key annual inspection all 35 of the National Minimum Standards for Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution, Economic Wellbeing and Organisation were applied and judged. The inspection was managed over two visits. The young people were not involved in the inspection programme. Significant time was spent with staff on duty and the Registered Manager, discussing the home's systems and procedures and organisational issues. This was the first inspection since registration in January this year.

Individuality is recognised by all staff and young people's safety is actively being promoted. Staff are enthusiastic in providing a responsive service and in improving the environment. Self care and semi- independence routines are supported and encouraged, and there are sound strategies to promote responsible behaviour. The young people are encouraged to participate in local socialisation opportunities and certain contacts are being well developed. Staff are well informed of cultural issues and ensure that individuality is consistently recognised. The home's systems and procedures ensure for the wellbeing of the young people, and the Registered Manager actively ensures the stability of the home. There are five recommendations for continued improvement, one concerns menu detail and another staff training in medication handling. Other recommendations include; additional educational opportunities for the young people, staff supervision programme and a restraint training input. There is one action recorded. This is for all staff to receive training in safe food handling.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since the home was first Registered on 13 January 2009.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff illustrated a very good knowledge and understanding of what makes up a balanced and nutritious diet. However, the menu detail is limited and provides a narrow account of food being eaten. The young people are afforded choice with their meals and staff acknowledge their likes and dislikes when shopping and planning menus. The young people are provided with excellent opportunities to plan and contribute to the meal arrangements. Whilst the young people's interest in food and healthy eating is generally encouraged, the present group of young people remaining are yet to be persuaded of the benefits of regular vegetable intake. All meal times are treated as social occasions and the foods from other cultures have been tried and discussed. However, not all staff has yet to complete safe food handling training. This omission has safety implications.

Young people's health needs are continuously identified and assessed, and are regularly monitored during review and planning meetings. Planning information is comprehensively maintained and demonstrate how health needs are to be met. Health planning for all young people includes regular appointments with the local clinic, dentist and opticians. Pamphlet information and advice on sexual health, smoking and drug abuse is available, and safety issues are suitably discussed. Staff are constructive in maintaining and supporting the good health of the young people.

The medicine storage arrangements and administration systems are well maintained and all staff have attended recent first aid and medicine handling training programmes. This ensures that all medicines are given and stored as prescribed, and ensures for the safety of the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The young people's right to privacy is acknowledged and confirmed in all routines and procedures. Policy documentation confirms the application of all care routines. All routines are agreed with families and placing authorities. Policy content is consistent with the need to safeguard and protect each young person.

The complaints procedures are well established and ensure that any complaint is suitably investigated with full regards to timescale and keeping the families and placing authority informed. The reporting procedures are readily accessible by the young people and are presented in a user friendly format. No complaints have been made by the current group of young people. All staff has received training on the complaint reporting arrangements.

The home's safeguarding and protection policy and procedures are kept within the home and are readily available to staff and young people. Staff are fully informed of the whistle blowing policy and are aware of the action that is to be taken in the event of an abuse allegation being made or suspected. This ensures that the welfare of the young people is actively promoted and staff are committed in maintaining a protective environment.

Anti-bullying procedures and strategies are available within the home and ensure that young people are given suitable guidance, advice and support. Staff training programmes focus on encouraging positive behaviours and sensitive and considered interventions.

All unauthorised absences are suitably recorded and reported. Policy and procedural arrangements help ensure for the protection and safety of the young people. All incidents and the reporting of event notification are directed by policy and procedural arrangements. All agencies are notified within the agreed timescales and responsive action is clearly taken where necessary, to safeguard and protect the young people.

The home's behaviour management and control, and disciplinary measures are based on establishing and maintaining positive relationships. Good use is made of verbal discussion techniques and mature and acceptable behaviours are consistently encouraged. All control measures are discussed with the social workers concerned and no restraint incidents are recorded. Additional restraint training is being considered in order to reflect the current lone person working arrangements. Staff recounted friendly and sociable interactions with the young people and these are confirmed in the behaviour records.

The home provides for the physical safety and security of the young people. The fire safety policy and procedures assist in the scheduling and recording of all alarm and safety equipment checks. All insurance and service certificates are up to date. Risk assessment information is comprehensively maintained and all anticipated circumstances and behaviours are recorded accordingly. The home actively seeks to promote the safety and wellbeing of the young people.

The recruitment and vetting procedures include all the required record, identity and reference check information. Issues of culture, disability, equality and gender are also well considered. The procedures contribute to the maintenance of protective care environment and one that prevents the young people's exposure to potential abusers.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Individual support and attention is regularly provided to the young people. Personal progress and achievements are regularly assessed and recorded. Staff are enthusiastic in maintaining a supportive and caring environment that recognises individual growth and development. The young people are able to access independent advice from approved external agencies and independent visiting professionals.

Educational development and achievement is being regularly reviewed during review and planning meetings. The staff and LEA have responded effectively to ensure for continuity of educational placement. However, the current arrangements are limited and do not provide a full timetable. This arrangement restricts the young people's learning. The home's facilities provide adequate space for any homework study task and staff are committed in supporting the educational programmes that are agreed.

The young people are actively encouraged to make use of local facilities and regular social activities are planned and enjoyed by the young people. Young people's meetings are recorded on a monthly basis and illustrate staff availability to discuss and consider a range of possible leisure and hobby interests. The current group of young people are also particularly interested in maintaining social networks.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Placement planning information is suitably detailed and clearly presents the assessed needs of each young person. Review meetings are held on a regular basis and there is a comprehensive account of the welfare arrangements, education, social and emotional development, health and contacts. Review meetings also regularly consider the young people's wishes and feelings. Good attention is given to the contact arrangements for all young people. Staff enable the young people's contribution to the planning process and ensure that the young people's wishes and feelings are considered and recorded. This is a strength of the home's practice and encourages the young people's development and maturity.

The needs of the young people are regularly and formally reviewed throughout the duration of the placement. All recent review meetings are consistently attended by the young people and their contributions are recorded and included in the home's day-to-day care planning arrangements.

All agreed contacts are constructively supported and staff will regularly encourage social contacts and the development of appropriate relationships. Contact with the placing authority is well established and this ensures that all areas of planning responsibility are discussed and agreed. Review actions are agreed and timescales are recorded.

The young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. Pre-placement visits can be organised and the young person pamphlet information is available to assist and confirm certain routines and welfare arrangements. The pamphlet information also provides additional detail on external contacts and the complaints procedures.

Regular young people's meetings are used to facilitate involvement in all house routines and welfare arrangements. These meetings have a set agenda that encourages discussion and agreement. The agenda includes items of race, religion, language and culture. The young people's individuality and understanding is promoted and supported by the staff team.

All observed interactions and exchanges were friendly and sociable. Staff are able to set clear and acceptable boundaries for behaviour and communication. The young people's communication skills and social and emotional development is successfully enhanced by the purposeful involvement of the staff team.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Pathway planning information does not yet apply to the current group of young people. However, the young people's general independence and self reliance with certain budgeting, shopping and domestic care routines is being actively promoted.

Staff ensure that that individual choice and responsibility is regularly encouraged and if necessary, supported. All personal care items are kept and stored privately and all allowance records are openly discussed and agreed.

The home's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose and function. The setting is supportive to each young person's development.

The home presents as a comfortable and suitably furnished childcare setting that is maintained to a very good standard, with adequate communal facilities. Each young person has their own bedroom area. All recent maintenance items have received attention. The layout of the facilities ensure for the privacy and dignity of the young people.

Staff office accommodation is sufficient for the numbers involved.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's statement of purpose is kept within the home and is readily available for all staff, visiting professionals, relatives and the young people. The document has been recently reviewed.

The young people are looked after by staff who are enabled and effectively supported and guided in safeguarding and promoting their well-being. However, the supervision programme is not maintained for all staff. This omission is limiting for certain staff, but has no immediate safety impact on the young people. The supervision agenda is comprehensive and this provides staff with opportunity to regularly discuss care and conduct concerns. Annual appraisal sessions are scheduled for later this year and will focus on any training shortfall. The staff meeting record confirms a regular monthly pattern of meetings with a number of set agenda items that include religion, equal opportunities, culture and diversity. All staff are encouraged to contribute to welfare and development items.

Staff provided positive comment and support for the home's team work approach and the advice and assistance from the home's Registered Manager. Staff agreed that there was often informal and focused discussion on practice issues. Staffing levels are being maintained and stability and continuity is established and supported by the Registered Manager. This ensures that there is a responsive and settled environment for the young people.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Issues of individuality, race, culture and religion are recorded for discussion in young people meetings and are also listed in the staff team meeting agenda. In each outcome area individuality is recognised and culture understood. Support for staff on occasions of racially aggravated behaviour is of a high quality and interventions are thoughtfully and meaningfully applied. The home's recruitment programme pays good regard to equality of opportunity. Individual development and training programmes assist staff in the fulfilment of their duties. The 2009 training schedule includes ethnicity and diversity awareness events.

National Vocational Qualification at level 3 training programmes are supported and new staff are regularly enrolled for this award. Staff also hold additional social care qualifications. The majority of staff have completed induction training programmes including first aid, health and safety, food hygiene, child protection events and introduction to the home's recording and reporting procedures. Staff are enthusiastic and confident in their duties within the home and the young people are guided and enabled by staff who are competent in the role they undertake.

The content of the home's care and conduct records illustrate that the young people benefit from a stable and efficiently maintained care environment. Independent reports provide additional and positive monitoring information.

The young people's records evidence individuality, development and progress. All records are stored safely and with full regard to the young people's right for access and the essential safety and security requirements.

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
10	ensure that all staff have received appropriate training in safe food handling and hygiene (Regulation 13 (1)(a)).	27 July 2009

Recommendations

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

- provide more detail of meals taken by the young people (NMS 10)
- ensure that all staff are trained in the administration of medication (NMS 13)
- consider the introduction of restraint training for all staff (NMS 22)
- ensure that additional educational opportunities are available (NMS 14)
- ensure that supervision sessions are available for all staff (NMS 28).