

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC386837
Inspection date	1 March 2010
Inspector	Anthony Kyem
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	9 July 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 provides care and accommodation for two young people of either sex, aged between 10 and 16 years of age. The home is owned and managed by a private company.

The property is a semi-detached house with good access to local amenities. The home comprises three separate bedrooms, washing facilities, kitchen, lounge and dining area. To the front of the home there is off-road parking available for staff cars and to the rear of the property is an enclosed garden.

Summary

The inspection of the home was unannounced. All key national minimum standards were inspected. This is the home's first key inspection since registration with Ofsted.

The service has recently had an admission of a young person, having been inoperable for some time. Therefore, records held in respect of young people are somewhat limited. The home is judged to be a satisfactory service, with sound practices.

Young people's placement plans are well written and these reflect young people's needs for individual support. Information made available by placing authorities is used well to inform the home's own care planning arrangements. Young people's risk assessments are clearly written and these provide staff with good information, which enables them to respond to young people's needs sensitively.

However, the home has not yet secured access to a range of appropriate support services to ensure that all the particular needs of young people are met.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

No young people were accommodated at the last inspection, and no actions were previously raised. A recommendation had been made in relation to the gardens. Since the last visit, the gardens to the front and the rear of the property have been tendered to, to improve the home's external appearance.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's needs and personal preferences in relation to food have yet to be formally considered in relation to the planning and preparation of meals. Previous menus show that young people are provided with a balanced and varied diet and that healthy eating is encouraged.

Overall, there is good information available to show how the home plans to meet young people's health needs, which are clearly recorded within young people's placement plans. However, there are a number of health issues which remain outstanding.

Young people are not registered with local health services and identified support has not been sourced, although both these issues are in the process of being addressed. Once registered,

staff can encourage young people to attend their routine health appointments and promote young people's health needs and emotional well-being more effectively.

Staff ensure that young people receive medical support if they need it. There is always at least one member of staff on duty who is suitably trained to provide young people with emergency treatment if needed. Medical consent is obtained which permits staff to provide first aid and gives them the authority needed to attend to young people's routine health needs. The procedures for recording, administering and storing young people's medication are all managed safely.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected and their private information is securely stored for the purposes of confidentiality. Young people are able to wash in privacy and they are provided with their own separate bedrooms, which enables them to secure their personal belongings safely. Young people are made aware of the home's complaints procedure, which is summarised for them in the form of a guide. No complaints were raised by young people during this visit and none were recorded within the complaints records examined.

There are no current issues with young people being exposed to bullying. Staff are aware of their safeguarding duties and this includes protecting young people from all forms of abuse and bullying. Training records show that staff have access to appropriate training in relation to safeguarding. Most, but not all, staff are suitably trained.

Young people are protected when they absent themselves without authority and staff actively take all reasonable steps to promote their safe return. Appropriate authorities are notified of all significant events, which promotes young people's welfare and safety. Minor irregularities were identified in respect of the missing persons' records held, as the most recent unauthorised absences were not recorded.

Young people's behaviours are managed in a controlled and sensitive way. Behaviour management plans cover known risks and include strategies to help staff manage potential behaviours. Staff respond to inappropriate behaviour in such a way that has ensured that restraints have never been used. The use of sanctions is fair in response to unacceptable behaviour.

Generally, health and safety systems are used effectively to promote environmental safety. There are safety tests undertaken to gas and portable electrical appliances and there is routine testing of the home's fire fighting equipment. However, fire evacuation drills are not held within the recommended timescales, to ensure that young people know how to evacuate the premises safely, in the event of fire.

Staff recruitment practices are broadly compliant with the regulations and standards. There was evidence to show that all staff have enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks undertaken to assess their suitability to work with children. However, discrepancies were identified in respect of staff changing their employment roles and status, for example, from handyperson to childcare worker, without appropriate training, induction and new checks being undertaken. Recruitment procedures do not routinely include renewing staff's enhanced disclosures at suitable intervals, which is considered good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's educational needs are not being fully met. There are no educational plans and no evidence of formal education being provided, other than educational activities such as visits to local museums. Without any form of formal education, young people will not develop and fulfil their true potential.

Young people receive good advice and support through key working, where they need it or request it. The home's staffing arrangements ensure that there are always sufficient staff on duty, for young people to turn to for support.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home ensures that young people have written placement plans, which reflect their needs for individual support. Information provided by placing authorities has been used well to inform these. Care planning documentation is detailed and this covers the support young people will need to receive to help staff meet their needs comprehensively. Placement planning meetings are held within the specified timescales.

The home promotes and supports contact, which helps young people to sustain their family links and build on their support networks for the future.

While the home is able to accept planned admissions, admissions since the home's registration have been emergency short-term placements.

There are good opportunities for young people to be consulted and there are regular opportunities provided for young people to meet with staff, through informal means and through key working and designated children's meetings. These collectively provide young people with regular opportunities to have a say in how the home is run.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is suitably furnished, providing young people with accommodation, which is suitable. The home's location enables young people to benefit from easy access to bus services, shopping centres, sports facilities and local places of interest.

The property itself is indistinguishable as a children's home, therefore young people do not feel stigmatised by their physical surroundings. There are board games, a games console and DVDs for young people's recreational use. There are suitable washing facilities and young people are able to personalise their own private living accommodation, in accordance with their requests. The home's size and location are conducive to its function and purpose.

The standard of decorative repair of the home is satisfactory. However, the hall stairs carpet is stained and the lounge door is currently damaged and unsafe.

Young people are encouraged to learn basic life skills to enable them to become more independent. Those resident are young and are not of the age where they are ready, or required

to make the formal transition towards adulthood. Therefore, young people are not yet required to have formal plans in place to support them with their independence.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The Statement of Purpose makes the home's commitment to promoting diversity clear. Young people are cared for by a diverse staff team in terms of gender and ethnic background. Young people receive continuity of care, which enables them to form trusting relationships with the same designated staff.

Staff, while collectively experienced, are not suitably qualified. The achievement rate of staff who have obtained a recognised qualification in social care is below the minimum requirement, with less than 80% of staff currently qualified to National Vocational Qualification standards. Staffing ratios offer young people good support in accordance with their needs; however, the manager is included within the current 2:1 staff ratio, which means the home is potentially understaffed.

The manager of the home has the skills, professional competence and experience to manage the home. However, by including the manager within, and not in addition to, the numbers of staff required to be on duty, the time the manager has to manage the home is effectively restricted. It was also identified that the manager has recently worked long hours, as there is no-one employed to deputise in their absence.

There is a programme of training in place for staff to develop their knowledge and skills. A diverse range of courses is provided; however, training records are not comprehensively maintained to show the professional competence of the staff team. Most staff have undertaken relevant training but not all have undertaken core training in care and control, and safeguarding.

There has been inconsistent monitoring of the home's performance, given that the home has been inoperable for some time. Where young people have been placed, the performance of the home has been monitored, in accordance with the home's statutory responsibilities. The manager checks the home's administrative systems to identify areas of weaknesses and areas for potential improvement.

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
12	ensure that children's health needs are met, including access to a GP, dental care and support to keep appointments (Regulation 20.2 a & b)	2 April 2010
26	ensure that fire drills are held at suitable intervals (Regulation 32.1c)	4 May 2010

27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Regulation 26.	2 April 2010
14	maintain close liaison with each child's placing authority with a view to obtaining appropriate educational arrangements for the child (Regulation 18.1)	27 April 2010
24	ensure the accommodation provided is suitably furnished and equipped and kept in good structural repair (Regulation 31.2).	1 April 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people have access to therapeutic support where needed or required (NMS 12.1)
- ensure appropriate records are maintained for missing persons (NMS 19.6)
- ensure there are clear arrangements for staff to deputise in the Registered Manager's absence (NMS 29.2)
- ensure the numbers and overall competence of staff on duty are sufficient in relation to the fulfilment of the home's Statement of Purpose (NMS 29.1)
- ensure that appropriate records are held to show the numbers of staff who have completed mandatory training, specifically in relation to safeguarding and care and control. (NMS 31.1)