

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC387684
Inspection date	12 July 2010
Inspector	Peter Daniel
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	20 November 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 residential home for children and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The home has accommodation for six children/young people aged 12 to 17 years, of either gender. It is able to offer placements to young people with associated complex needs, such as epilepsy, autism or challenging behaviours. The home can offer planned, emergency and respite placements. The home is conveniently situated for rail and bus routes and is within walking distance of local shops. It is a detached property with its own secluded private gardens.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection that considered all the national minimum standards. The home is well run and has positive leadership. The staff are competent and experienced. The majority of staff are in the process of completing the National Vocational Qualification at level 3. Staff are supported by management and receive regular supervision. Management encourage practice development and staff attend additional training. Relationships between the staff and young people are very positive. The home has excellent safeguarding and monitoring systems. Young people attend daily house meetings where they have a say in the way the home is run. The home is extremely comfortable and furnished to a high standard. There are no breaches of regulations and only one minor recommendation concerning young people signing off complaints. The staff group is relatively new and young people have spoken of their desire for continuity. The balance of the staff group does not yet reflect the community served by the home. The home does however promote diversity in other ways such as holding cultural evenings. Young people feel supported and gave feedback as follows 'The staff are nice. My experience here is good. I like this place we get along alright with the staff. I have nothing to complain about'. Overall, the staff are meeting the needs of the young people. All the minimum standards are met and there are no breaches of regulations.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The majority of staff have been enrolled on National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and are due to complete the assessment in August.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The home gives priority to promoting the physical, emotional and health needs of the young people. There are many examples of excellent practice. In particular young people have a health plan that is an ongoing record of all matters relating to their health. There is good record keeping in relation to medication records. Staff support young people in attending hospital appointments, visits to the GP, dentist and optician's, as appropriate. Young people have their health needs reviewed at their statutory review. A key worker provides guidance and support on health and personal issues. Young people are given emotional support and advice about the consequences of smoking, alcohol and substance abuse. The home has a no smoking policy.

Young people enjoy healthy, balanced meals that meet their dietary needs. They have the opportunity at the house meeting to state their food preferences. Fresh fruit and vegetables

are available as part of their diet. The home has regular culture nights when young people can sample recipes from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

Staff are well trained in meeting health needs. They have undertaken first aid, medication and food hygiene training. They fully understand their role regarding the administration of medication. Medication is safely stored in a locked cupboard in the office.

The staff are also aware of the benefits of exercise. They encourage young people to take part in activities such as the gym.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home's approach to safeguarding is outstanding. Staff strive for improvement, evaluate practice and discuss each young person's progress at weekly meetings. There is evidence of excellent practice throughout.

The home has effective procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the young people. Staff understand their duties in relation to safeguarding and the reporting of concerns to the appropriate authorities. Each young person undergoes a risk assessment. Their progress is discussed at weekly staff meetings where information is shared about managing their behaviour. Staff have been offered child protection training, covering, for example, the recognition and signs of sexual abuse and the understanding of children who self-harm.

The organisation takes appropriate steps in relation to recruitment. All staff have up to date Criminal Record Bureau checks. The home has a system for the monitoring and signing in of visitors.

The home has excellent procedures for the recording and monitoring of young people's behaviour. These include logs and records for unauthorised absence, allegations and suspicions of abuse, bullying, significant incidents, sanctions and rewards, restraints, complaints and notifications to Ofsted. The staff have excellent relationships with the local police.

The home has an atmosphere of order and calm and the relationships between staff and the young people are very positive. The young people are encouraged to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Staff provide safe and consistent boundaries and structure. There are sound relationships between staff and young people based on honesty and mutual respect and staff show empathy and understanding. One young person fed back as follows 'we get on good with the staff, they respect us. They have rules and if you kick off there will be punishment but if you do alright you get rewards.'

The home operates a system of sanctions and rewards. Sanctions include reparation for damage or the delay of pocket money. Rewards are usually linked to offering a young person an activity. Restraint is used only as a last resort and staff first try and calm a young person down. Bullying is addressed at the daily house meeting. Young people know how to access the complaints procedure. Since the last inspection there have been three minor complaints that were dealt with appropriately and signed off by the manager. A recommendation has been included to ensure that the young person also signs off the complaint. The home monitors complaints through the regulation 33 visitor.

The home ensures that residents are safe within the building. Bedroom doors and fire exits are chimed to monitor young people's movements during day and night. This keeps a check of any inappropriate behaviour and also monitors the young person's safety. Staff undertake regular safety and fire checks. The home has carried out an evening fire drill involving evacuation of the building. There is a maintenance team that carries out repairs.

Young people have the opportunity for privacy. They can spend time in their bedroom or choose to go to the lounge or dining room. Bedrooms, toilets and bathrooms can be locked but can be overridden if necessary.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home, through the key worker, offers support to young people regarding their social and educational development. The young people also attend a daily house meeting where they discuss and share feelings that impact on the group.

The home actively promotes the education and career development of young people. Young people who are not in mainstream education have the option of attending a small education unit that is part of the wider organisation. Two young people at the home are currently attending the unit and staff escort them to the site. The home also hires tutors when appropriate. Young people who have completed their education are supported in finding employment. Young people have access to the local library, where there is a computer available.

Young people are encouraged to take part in leisure and recreational activities. The choice of activities is discussed at the house meetings. A local community liaison officer is soon to visit the home to discuss summer holiday schemes.

Overall, young people gave positive feedback about the support they are receiving. One young person said 'I like my key worker. He does a lot of stuff with me, activities, tennis, football and taking me to the park. He is helpful'. A placing social worker also gave complimentary feedback as follows, 'the support and guidance throughout his stay was both professional and warming. I know he felt relaxed and enjoyed his stay with you. I visited on numerous occasions throughout his stay and the high level of support by staff was evident on each occasion'.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have a placement plan or support plan that sets out their individual needs and placement objectives. The placement plan covers the Every Child Matters outcomes in relation to the young person's needs. The placement plan is completed through discussion with the young person and the placing social worker. The progress of the young person is reviewed at the looked after statutory review. The key worker from the home attends the young person's review. Staff are also involved in ongoing case discussion within the home about each young person. Key worker session notes record the young person's progress.

Staff encourage young people to keep contact with family and friends through home visits and telephone contact.

The staff deal effectively and sensitively with when a young person is admitted to the home. Before a young person moves in, they have the opportunity to attend an introductory visit. This is not possible for new admissions made as an emergency placement.

Young people attend daily house meetings where they have the opportunity to influence the way the home is run and to make decisions that impact upon their daily living.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive positive help to prepare them for leaving care. The home has implemented an independence plan that covers a range of tasks, such as budgeting, seeking employment and preparation for independent living. This is linked to the Pathway Plan. Before leaving care, young people have the option of staying at an independence unit run by the organisation and located at another site.

The home offers homely and comfortable accommodation decorated and furnished to a high standard. Bedrooms are spacious and well furnished. Young people can personalise their rooms. The living room, dining room and kitchen are modern and suitably equipped. There are adequate bathroom, shower room and toilet facilities. Young people commented 'its nice, everything, the rooms look nice.....it's alright, it's cosy.....It's in good condition'

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has an up to date Statement of Purpose. Staff are sufficient in number and experience. The home is almost fully staffed, except for one vacancy for a residential support worker. The home occasionally uses agency staff to cover for vacant posts or sickness. The home maintains a ratio of one staff to two young people at any one time. Overnight cover consists of two sleeping in staff and a manager is on call. The staff group is relatively new. The manager is recently appointed and the rest of the staff have been in post for approximately 6 -12 months.

All permanent staff are currently studying the National Vocational Qualification at level 3, except for one who will start in September. The majority are due to complete the training by next month. The new manager has relevant qualifications and has completed the Registered Manager's award. Staff are offered in-service training opportunities. Courses on offer have included child protection, children who self-harm, restraint, fire fighting, first aid and food hygiene. Staff receive formal supervision once a month. Most staff have not yet been in post long enough to have an annual appraisal.

Regulation 33 visits and reports are being undertaken routinely and the care of young people is monitored and adapted in light of this information. Management also complete a report under Regulation 34.

Each young person has a secure record of his or her progress. Files are in excellent order and include comprehensive records.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. There is a good gender balance amongst the staff. In order to better reflect the diversity of its catchment area, the home's aim is to recruit more ethnic minority staff in the longer term. The staff do promote diversity through holding

'culture nights'. This involves cooking a meal from a different country and having a discussion in relation to the culture. The young person's guide includes information about local resources in relation to religious places of worship and advocacy.

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 when logging complaints, young people are kept informed of the progress and signed off the complaint when they are satisfied it has been resolved - National Minimum Standard 16