

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC389698
Inspection date	18 February 2010
Inspector	Mary Timms
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	4 August 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 provides two placements for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The service is one of three small homes operated locally in addition to registered homes in other regions. The service also provides a school setting within easy travelling distance, which is available to meet the needs of children who have no current mainstream school placement.

Children have individual bedrooms and open access to an appropriate range of communal living areas. There is a garden providing space for games or relaxation.

Two children currently live in this home, both were present and participated in this inspection.

Summary

This was an unannounced interim inspection. The visit was planned to review the progress the provider has made with a required action and recommendations set on the previous inspection. The visit also assessed the care provided to children against key national minimum standards under the staying safe outcome area.

The judgements and reporting on this inspection are supported by evidence from the full key inspection undertaken in July 2009 and are unchanged on this interim visit. Judgements will be reviewed on the next full inspection. The service continues to provide good safeguarding arrangements. However, there are areas of recording which require improvement in order to demonstrate how the service fully safeguards children. As this is an interim inspection there is limited reporting under being healthy, economic well-being and positive contribution.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There has been a lack of progress with the required action set on the previous inspection. Records kept in relation to the use of any measure of control or discipline are again found to sometimes lack the level of and areas of detail required by regulations. A further action has been set and the progress the provider makes will be monitored by Ofsted.

The Registered Manager has taken action to improve the arrangements for recording the stock of non-prescribed medication held in the home.

It was not possible to fully assess progress in relation to the issuing of a young person's guide as no children have been admitted since the previous inspection. This will be reviewed again on future inspections.

The service now issues survey questionnaires to both parents and social work teams. The Registered Manager confirms that feedback informs service development.

Placement plans are again found to sometimes lack updated detail as needs change. Action has not been taken to ensure that children moving towards leaving care have a comprehensive plan, as guided by national minimum standards. A child-friendly summary of the placement

plan is now produced and a copy is issued to children. There continues to be a lack of evidence that written plans have been agreed by placing social workers.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

A limited amount of non-prescribed medication is held in the home to support children's needs. The stock of non-prescribed medication is recorded into a stock control system.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The service continues to provide good care arrangements which prioritise children's safety and well-being.

Staff recruitment procedures are safe. A recent audit undertaken by Ofsted at this provider's head office identified that 'there are good systems in place to make suitability decisions about staff and records are maintained to a high standard'.

Children's care is supported by risk assessments which clarify risk management strategies to support known and potential hazards. However, there are occasions when risk assessments are not updated promptly as needs change.

The service has policies and procedures to inform practice if children are found to be missing without consent. There have been no such events since the last inspection.

Behaviour is managed well. Children are monitored and supervised within the home. They are made aware of the home's policy on bullying when they are first admitted. Bullying is addressed quickly and one-to-one time is spent talking to children about bullying behaviours. Individual behaviour management plans are produced which clarify behaviour management strategies; however, there are some areas of known challenging behaviours which are not incorporated into care planning. This raises the potential for inconsistency in the way behaviour is addressed. The detailed records required by regulation are not always maintained in relation to used measures of control, necessary to evidence that children are fully safeguarded.

The service has complaints policies and procedures and children are able to raise a complaint. Children's comments include 'yes I know how to make a complaint', also confirming that if they do raise a concern that this is responded to. However, there is evident confusion as to where children's verbal complaints should be recorded. The service operates a 'grumbles' log, however, this has not been used in the last twelve months. There is a formal complaints log, with no complaints recorded. Some low key complaints are recorded in daily records and others are captured on an electronic record system, which does not always clarify the actions which have been taken. This raises the potential that the manner in which children's complaints are addressed may be missed within management monitoring checks.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Care arrangements are informed by individual placement plans; a child-friendly summary of the plan is issued to children. Placement plans are not currently endorsed as agreed by placing authority. However, the Registered Manager confirms that social workers are provided with a copy of the plan. Placement plans set out an assessment of need and clarify how needs will be met. However, there are some areas where there is a lack of placement and risk management planning. This raises the potential for needs to be unmet.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Children are supported to develop independent living skills. However, comprehensive placement plans are not produced in the manner set out in national minimum standards and necessary to guide care arrangements. This means that children may not always receive appropriately planned and structured support to aid their transition into adulthood.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
22	ensure that within 24 hours of the use of any measure of control, restraint or discipline a written record is made in a volume kept for the purpose which shall include the areas set out in regulation (Regulation 17.4)	26 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that risk assessments estimating the level of risk and identifying action to be taken both to reduce risks to an acceptable level and to avoid unnecessary risks, are carried out and are regularly reviewed. In particular this relates to the need to update risk assessments promptly as needs change (NMS 26.2)
- seek the views of the placing social worker on the content and implementation of the placement plan. In particular this relates to the need to evidence that social workers have been consulted and are aware of the content of the written placement plan (NMS 2.5)
- ensure that the placement plan for each young person sets out clearly the assessed needs of the young person, the objectives of the placement and how these are to be met by the service on a day to day basis (NMS 2.1)

- ensure that a written record is made and kept of the person making a complaint, date of the complaint, nature of the complaint, action taken and outcome of the complaint. (NMS 16.3)