

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	24 February 2010
Inspector	Stephen Graham
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	1 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 for up to six children with emotional or behavioural difficulties aged between eight and 17 years of age.

The service is provided from a detached house set in its own grounds in the suburbs of the local town. The house provides well-furnished and equipped accommodation on three floors that is planned to suit the needs of the children. There is good access to local public transport.

Summary

The purpose of this visit was to conduct a full unannounced inspection which examined all key national minimum standards.

Young people living at the home benefit from satisfactory levels of care. They are encouraged to eat healthily and to be involved in menu choice. However, not all of the documents needed to help ensure that their health needs are being met are in place. The staff team receive guidance and training to help them keep young people safe. Some records are not completed in sufficient detail to demonstrate how they do this and show how information is shared. On some occasions the staff team do not follow the guidance put in place to help them.

Young people receive good support in their employment and education. They are also encouraged to give their views about how the home is run. However, not all of the documents agreeing how young people are to be cared for are in place. The building is well maintained and provides a good homely environment for young people to live in. The quality of the service provided to young people living at the home is regularly monitored. However, the reports produced from this do not contain sufficient detail regarding the matters monitored. Some of the documentation used to describe the service provided to young people is inaccurate.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This was the first inspection of the service.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people living at the home receive satisfactory help from staff to meet their health needs. When young people come to live at the home, their personal food preferences and any special dietary needs they may have are discussed with them. Young people are also encouraged to contribute their ideas to menu planning through the regular young people's meetings, with their views recorded. A record is kept of the meals prepared and provided to young people. Menus are varied and include healthy choices and examples of food from different cultures. Young people spoken with described how they can contribute their ideas about the meals provided. They confirmed that they receive enough to eat. They also gave some positive examples of how the staff team encourage them to participate in healthy activities. Food hygiene training is provided to staff. The home was recently visited by the local environmental health department and received a certificate for the standards of food hygiene maintained.

The staff team receive training and have access to detailed health and medication procedures to ensure that any medication or first aid treatment needed by young people is administered safely. Individual health plans are in place, as are records of any accidents. However, consents for the administration of medication and for any treatment were not available for each young person living at the home. This may cause delay in obtaining appropriate medical assistance in an emergency. Young people are helped by staff to register with local health services. Those young people spoken with described how staff would support them with their health appointments. Detailed records are maintained of their attendance at these appointments as well as their access to additional specialist advice where this is necessary. The manager described the good links the home has established with local health services for looked after children.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

There are satisfactory arrangements at the home to help make sure that children are cared for safely. Staff follow the guidance provided to them regarding how case records should be written and kept safely stored. Room checks take place, if this is necessary, to help keep children safe; the records of these do not always include the time of the search or whether young people themselves were aware that a search had taken place. The national minimum standards for children's homes recommends that this information should be recorded. Young people can lock their rooms and have safe storage for their personal items. Procedures at the home have been reviewed to ensure that the office space and the personal correspondence received by young people are kept safe.

Staff check to make sure that any visitors to the home are suitable and that young people are safe when visitors are present. Visitors are asked to sign the visitors' book and are closely supervised by staff. Staff undergo thorough checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with children.

Arrangements for safeguarding children and young people from abuse are satisfactory. Training in the protection of children is provided regularly to staff. However, some significant events occurring at the home have not been notified as required by the regulations. Detailed risk assessments are completed in discussion with young people and their social workers. There are clear procedures in place at the home which are used if young people are ever missing. These help to ensure that they are found and kept safe, as quickly as possible. Records are kept by staff regarding the circumstances of any absences. However, the current recording system does not contain sufficient detail of the circumstances of the absences and who has spoken with the young person following their return. This means that it may be difficult to understand the reasons for the young person going missing and thus prevent it happening again.

Young people are provided with complaints information and can raise any concerns they may have. Young people told us that they know how to make a complaint. Staff are provided with guidance and training to help them protect young people from bullying. Training is also provided to staff in how to use physical restraint to keep children safe and in how to record any incidents that occur. There is also agreed guidance for staff to follow if sanctions are imposed. However, some of the sanctions that have been imposed by staff are in breach of this guidance.

Risk assessments and health and safety checklists are used by staff to help ensure that the home is a safe place for young people to live in. Any repairs needed are notified promptly and routine checks are undertaken on the safety equipment. The staff team are trained to know

what to do if there is an emergency and they encourage young people to practice this regularly with them.

Formal written consent for this has not been obtained from each social worker placing children at the home, as required by the regulations.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive good levels of close individual support. The home has clear policies and guidance in place to help ensure this. Young people have very regular discussions with their key workers about their progress and the support they need to continue to achieve this. Young people spoken with gave a number of good examples of the social interests they have and how they are helped to participate in these by staff.

Young people also receive good support from staff in meeting their educational needs. One young person described how they are given help by staff and have all the equipment they need to participate properly at school. Care staff work closely with schools and colleges to promote and support good outcomes for young people. All young people living at the home are currently engaged in education. The home has a dedicated study room with sufficient space, resources and equipment to help young people with their learning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Detailed records of the care and support provided to young people living at the home are maintained by staff. However, formally agreed placement and care plans are not currently in place for each young person. This means that staff may not have appropriate written guidance to enable them to meet young people's needs appropriately. The manager is aware, and has contacted the local authority on several occasions, which has been unsuccessful. However, there was no evidence of any contact/s made with the social worker recorded on file to evidence this. Key workers prepare reports for the review meetings held regularly for each young person to discuss progress with their care plan; however, these reports are not always consistently stored and kept available for reference. Young people spoken to confirmed that they are encouraged and supported to give their own views.'

Young people spoken with confirmed that staff had tried to make them feel welcome and help them settle in quickly following their move into the home. The staff team work in close partnership with placing social workers and use the procedures in place to help ensure this. A register is maintained of children both coming to live at the home and those that have moved on. However, not all of the information required by the regulations is recorded within it.

There are policies and procedures in place at the home which are used by staff to support young people in maintaining contact with family and friends where this is appropriate. A detailed record of the contact occurring and any concerns arising are maintained to help ensure that young people remain safe.

Young people told us that they are encouraged to give their views about how the home is run through regular house meetings. Clear records of the house meetings are kept and provide

good evidence of how the views of young people are listened to and acted upon. Their individual views are also recorded in their care files.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive good support from staff at the home to help them practice the skills they will need to live successfully and independently when they are older. The progress young people make in developing these skills is recorded and regularly reviewed by staff in partnership with young people and their social workers.

The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard. An ongoing programme of maintenance and repair has helped staff to maintain a homely and comfortable environment for young people throughout the building. The furniture, fittings and equipment at the home are routinely monitored to help ensure that the home remains a safe place for young people to live in.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with a written guide to help them understand how the service is provided and who to speak to if they need any further advice. The home also has a Statement of Purpose which is used to help describe the service. However, some of the information contained within it is not accurate. This means that young people, parents and social workers are not fully informed of the service that should be provided by the home.

A number of the staff team at the home are well qualified and experienced in working with children and young people. New staff members are provided with induction training. All staff are encouraged to add to their qualifications and regularly attend additional training courses and briefings. Staffing levels are monitored and adjusted to help ensure that the needs of young people living at the home can be met on a daily basis. However, there is insufficient guidance within the Statement of Purpose as to how children are enabled to maintain relationships with members of each gender. There are clear arrangements in place to deputise for the manager if they themselves are ever absent.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Guidance and training for staff working at the home help to ensure this.

The manager uses the systems in place to monitor the home's records and to create monthly reports and recommendations. However, some of their reports, as well as those completed each month by the independent visitor to the home, are not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate the quality of the matters monitored. Young people's files are well maintained and presented.

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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20	ensure that if any of the events listed in Schedule 5 to the regulations occur at the home, these are notified without delay to the persons indicated (Regulation 30)	1 May 2010
5	ensure that recording within the admission and discharge register includes all of the information required by the regulations (Regulation 29)	1 May 2010
1	ensure that the Statement of Purpose contains an accurate description of all matters listed in Schedule 1 to the regulations. (Regulation 4)	1 May 2010

Recommendations

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

- obtain written permission for the administration of first aid for each young person living at the home (NMS 13.4)
- ensure that the room search log is completed in sufficient detail (NMS 9.8)
- ensure that the missing persons records are presented clearly and are completed in full detail (NMS 19.6)
- ensure that any sanctions are compliant with the regulations and that staff are following their own agreed procedures (NMS 22.4)
- ensure that each young person living at the home has an accurate and up-to-date placement plan (NMS 2.1)
- provide clear guidance on how children are enabled to maintain relationships with members of both genders (NMS 30.8)