

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspection date	29/12/2010
Inspector	Steve Pearson
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Date of last inspection	22/09/2010
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 and young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties aged between eight and 17 years of age. The home is run by a charity which also provides other children's homes in the region.

The service is provided from a detached, three-storey house set in its own grounds in the suburbs of the local town. There is good access to local public transport, shops and leisure facilities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was an unannounced, interim inspection and it assessed the key national minimum standards (NMS) associated with how young people are enabled to stay safe. The inspection also assessed whether the registered persons had met the one requirement and four recommendations made at the previous inspection on 22 September 2010. These were about recruitment records, menus, the recording of complaints and fire drills and the format of the children's guide.

A good level of staffing and a stable and consistent staff team help to ensure young people are cared for safely. The inspection identified some shortfalls particularly with the recording of restraints and the format of risk assessments. Young people are very positive about the care they receive.

At the time of the inspection, five young people were living in the children's home and three of them spoke to the inspector about the care they receive.

Improvements since the last inspection

The recording of food eaten by each young person is now clear and this enables assessment of diet over a period of time to be assessed.

The Registered Manager has conducted a full retrospective audit of staff recruitment records. The record of employment now commences when each member of staff has left school. Any identified gaps in employment have been identified reasons for any gaps are recorded.

The recording of formal complaints provides for greater accountability because the date of feedback to the complainant is now recorded. This enables confirmation to be made that complaints are being fully responded to within the recommended 28 day period.

The full names of young people and staff are now recorded when a fire drill is conducted. This means it is easy to tell who has or has not practised a drill.

Young people are now able to understand how the home operates more easily because the children's guide has been rewritten in a user-friendly format.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

The Registered Manager and staff promote young people's need for privacy appropriately. Young people can make and receive telephone calls in private without asking permission and they can lock their bedroom doors. The staff only conduct bedroom searches if necessary to promote the welfare of young people.

The Registered Manager and staff support young people to raise any concerns formally and informally. For example, one young person said 'if I was unhappy about something I'd tell the staff but we can also fill in a complaint form'. Young people can also attend a regular house meeting at which they can raise any dissatisfaction.

The staff all receive training in child protection and they know and understand how to respond to allegations, suspicions or evidence of abuse. However, the outcome of child protection enquiries are not always notified to Ofsted which means it is harder for the regulator to monitor concerns effectively.

Young people confirmed that, generally-speaking, there is no bullying although some name-calling does occur. For example, one young person said 'there isn't any real bullying, but sometimes there is name-calling. We all get on ok with each other'. A good level of staffing helps to minimise the risk of bullying. However, a formal risk assessment has not been conducted for the times and places when bullying may occur in the house. Similarly, individual assessments for the risk of each young person being either a victim or perpetrator of bullying have not been undertaken. Consequently the counter-bullying procedures are not as robust as they could be.

Sometimes young people go missing from the home without permission, however, most return a few hours later and always within 24 hours. The staff respond appropriately on such occasions and record details of when each young person was reported to the police and when they return. The staff report each incident to the young person's social worker.

The Registered Manager and staff are keen to promote positive behaviour and seek

the most appropriate and effective methods to do so. Young people said that sometimes the staff have to restrain young people and 'it is only done if someone is kicking off and is in danger or putting someone else in danger'. Another young person said 'if we do something wrong we are normally given a warning and if we don't stop the staff sometimes give us a negative consequence'. Young people said they thought the reasons why they were given a negative consequence were always fair and they confirmed they were regularly given rewards for good behaviour.

However there are several shortfalls in the recording and monitoring of sanction and restraint records. This means there is weakened accountability for the use of such measures. For example, young people are not offered the opportunity to record their comments and signature about the use of restraints, although they can do so for sanctions. The bound book of restraints also does not record whether any injuries were caused to or reported by the young person or any other person. In the bound book, the staff sometimes use technical jargon to describe how a restraint was conducted. This means people external to the home may not know what such terminology means. The Registered Manager is also not signing or adding comments to each entry in the bound book of restraints and sanctions. This means monitoring is not as robust as it should be.

The premises are maintained in a safe condition. Professional technicians regularly service the electrical equipment, gas appliances and the equipment for preventing, detecting and extinguishing fires. Appropriate liability insurance is also in place. The Registered Manager and staff also conduct risk assessments of the hazards that may affect young people. However these are not fully informative because the action necessary to reduce the risks and what to do if the hazard does occur is unclear because the guidance is generic to all the hazards rather than to each one.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to ensure that staff recruited to work with young people are suitable and safe. Young people also have a say in choosing the staff that are chosen to work in the home. The staff check the identity of all unknown visitors to the home. They also record the details of any visit in the visitors book, but such records are not fully informative because the reason for the visit is not recorded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
27	maintain in the children's home the records specified in Schedule 4. In particular, when anyone visits the children's home, record the reason for their visit (Regulation 29(1))	10/01/2011
20	notify Ofsted if any of the relevant events listed in column 1 of the table in Schedule 5 takes place. In particular this relates to the outcome of child protection enquiries. (Regulation 30)	29/12/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure risk assessments are clear about action to be taken to reduce or avoid each identified hazard to young people (NMS 26.2)
- conduct regular risk assessments of the times, places and circumstances in which the risk of bullying is greatest and assess, for each young person, the risk of being a perpetrator and victim of bullying (NMS 18.5)
- record, in the bound book of restraints, any injuries caused to or reported by the child or any other person and avoid the use of jargon when describing how a restraint was conducted (NMS 22.9)
- ensure the Registered Manager records any comment on the appropriateness of individual uses of sanctions or use of restraint, together with any subsequent action taken (NMS 22.11)

- ensure that when restraint is used, children are encouraged to write or have their views recorded and sign their names against them if possible in the records kept by the home. (NMS 22.14)