

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Sue Winson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection

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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

New Vale House is a detached house situated in a residential area. The ground floor has a large lounge, conservatory, dining room, kitchen, laundry, toilet and staff office. Upstairs there are three bedrooms for the use of young people and a staff sleeping-in room. It is situated close to community and leisure facilities and public transport. It provides care and accommodation for up to three young people placed by their local authorities. The home was registered in October 2009 and the manager, staff and young people transferred from a previous children's home.

Summary

This unannounced key inspection considered all key standards in every outcome area. This is a good home where the safety and welfare of young people is promoted well. The manager and staff are child-focused and help young people to achieve positive outcomes through individualised care and support. Education and healthy living are well promoted. Young people have a voice and their views and opinions are listened to and respected. Working in partnership with parents and other agencies and professionals is evident and benefits the young people. Effective placement planning details individual work with young people which is also done in line with their risk assessments. Diversity and equality are well promoted in all aspects of the service. There are sufficient staff who are well managed and there is a robust quality assurance system. There are some outstanding training needs and an insufficient number of staff have gained National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ) at level 3. The manager has been absent from the home and as a result formal staff supervisions have not been held on a monthly basis. Some repairs in the home have not been addressed in a timely manner.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The health and wellbeing of young people is promoted. They enjoy a healthy and varied diet and are involved in menu planning, shopping and cooking. They benefit from the advice and support of staff to maintain a healthy lifestyle. Individual diets are monitored and young people are encouraged to widen their diet and try foods which are new to them. Healthy living is promoted and staff encourage young people to take exercise.

Young people's health needs are met and they have access to health professionals as necessary. Detailed health plans include their physical and emotional needs and how these will be met. Young people benefit from contact with local agencies who provide information and services directly to them. All the young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician. Regular appointments are made for checkups and they are encouraged and supported to attend.

The procedures and practices for the administration of medication serve to protect the young people. Where they keep their own medication, risk assessments are in place for their safety.

The home takes advice from doctors or pharmacists as necessary, rather than keeping stocks of homely remedies. Medication is safely stored in the staff office. Staff are trained in first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are treated with dignity and respect. Staff knock on bedroom doors before entering and young people are aware of the room search policy. They can make telephone calls and see visitors in private. Information is stored securely to ensure confidentiality.

Policies, procedures and practices in respect of safeguarding, bullying, complaints, absence without authority and notifications of significant events serve to protect the young people. Young people are informed of their right to complain and know of a range of people they can speak to. They expressed confidence that any complaints would be listened to and dealt with appropriately. Young people are protected by robust procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues and notifying the relevant people of significant events. Positive working relationships exist between the home and the Local Safeguarding Children Board. The staff are trained in safeguarding and are focused on helping young people keep themselves safe. They discuss risks and dangers and remind young people about personal safety when they are going out. Guards are in place to provide protection when they are using the internet. Young people are protected from bullying. They are informed of their rights, and what constitutes bullying, in the young people's guide and through individual work.

Young people who are absent without authority are protected as far as is possible. Staff work closely with the local police, and multi-agency meetings take place when there are concerns about safety or vulnerability. Risk assessments are in place which are compiled with the young people and staff talk to them about safety issues. The home has successfully reduced the incidence of absence without authority.

The staff practice positive behaviour management to the benefit of the young people, who are encouraged and supported to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Sanctions are of short duration and are fair and reasonable. There have been few incidents requiring physical intervention and these are fully recorded. They demonstrate that restraint is used only where necessary for safety reasons. The home uses a reward system which the young people like and respond to positively. A small number of achievable goals are identified for each young person and they are encouraged, reminded and sometimes assisted to achieve them. Positive relationships between the staff and the young people contribute to the effectiveness of behaviour management strategies used. Staff receive training including updates.

Individual risk assessments serve as working documents and provide staff with specific guidance on managing risks, to keep young people safe. They contain clear and specific strategies to reduce or minimise risks and are updated regularly with the involvement of the young people. The home provides safety and security and appropriate checks are carried out within the required timescales. Young people have the opportunity to practice evacuating the building during fire drills. The building provides physical safety and security and all safety checks have been carried out. All the young people have been involved in fire drills. There is a system in place to record all visits made to the home for the safety of the young people.

Selection and recruitment processes protect young people. Gaps in employment are explored at interview and all the required checks and references are taken up prior to staff starting work.

Reference requests ask for verification of why employment ended. New staff go through a comprehensive induction period and work with experienced staff while they get to know the young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people receive individual support in line with their needs and requests. They say that staff are helpful and support them. In questionnaires received, placing social workers were positive about the home's focus on individual needs. The staff team has successfully worked to improve the recording of individual sessions and can demonstrate that work is carried out to meet the aims outlined in placement plans. Young people benefit because all staff know what work has been done and can build on this. Staff are skilled in using innovative ways to engage young people. The staff team work in conjunction with a range of agencies and services to meet the needs of the young people and advocate on their behalf where specialist services are not in place. All the young people benefit from having someone outside of the home who they can contact directly.

Education is actively promoted and young people are supported and encouraged to attend and achieve at school. There is good communication between schools and the staff, which ensures young people are well supported. Staff attend school meetings and education information is held on young people's files. Comments from placing social workers in questionnaires were positive, for example, that the staff are 'persistent in encouraging school attendance and interests'. Young people are encouraged to engage in community activities in line with their wishes and interests. Trips out are arranged by staff, and young people are given choices. Friends are welcomed in the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's needs are assessed effectively and comprehensively and the home can demonstrate that they are appropriately placed and are making progress. Staff are persistent in requesting full and updated written information from placing social workers to inform the plans. Young people contribute to their placement plans which are written in the first person in a child-friendly format. Staff know the young people well and are committed to working in partnership with other agencies, professionals and parents to the benefit of the young people. Reports record progress, and statutory reviews and planning meetings take place. Young people are encouraged to attend and are supported to express their views.

Contact with parents and other significant people is promoted. The staff establish and maintain positive working relationships with parents. Examples were given where working in partnership has benefited the young people. Staff keep parents informed of events and progress and ensure that contact takes place in line with care planning. When it is necessary for safeguarding reasons to supervise contact, the staff are sensitive in making arrangements which ensure that the experience is a positive one for all participants.

Young people have been supported to move into the home. The young people and staff group moved from a previously registered children's home five months ago. The move was well planned and young people were prepared and involved in choosing décor and furnishings before they

moved. Staff were sensitive to their needs and have supported them in settling in to a new house and area.

The home promotes inclusion of young people in decision making about their future and the running of the home. The majority of records have space for their views and signatures and they often add their comments. They are consulted in both group meetings and individual sessions. They are empowered to give their views and opinions as part of everyday life and do so readily.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps prepare them for adulthood. They are encouraged to carry out household chores and tasks, shopping, budgeting and cooking, at levels which reflect their age and abilities. Staff support them to develop life skills and balance their need for independence with safeguarding issues. None of the young people are of an age where formal pathway planning is in place. Young people receive pocket money and exercise choice in the clothes and personal requisites that they buy.

The house is suitable for purpose and provides sufficient space and adequate facilities to meet the needs of the young people resident. It is decorated in a homely style and young people have their own bedrooms which they are encouraged to personalise. There is sufficient dining space and rooms are available for young people to see visitors in private. There have been some delays in repairs being carried out.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Tolerance and respect are promoted and young people are encouraged to value difference. They receive individualised care and are given appropriate choices as part of day-to-day life. Staff inform them of their rights and encourage them to add their comments to written records and reports.

The home has a Statement of Purpose which outlines services provided and how it operates. The welcome pack for young people is in a child-friendly format and gives them appropriate information about the home.

The staff group are committed to achieving positive outcomes for young people and are involved in the improvement agenda. The majority of them have worked in the home for some time and they work as a team to provide consistency of care, to the benefit of the young people. There are sufficient staff and only occasionally are agency staff, known to the young people, used. Staff meetings take place monthly and provide a forum for discussion about young people and practice issues. There is sufficient time for handovers, completion of paperwork, shift planning and reflecting on practice. Staff say they are well supported by the manager who is available and approachable. Formal supervisions do not take place at the required frequency and the manager has taken steps to remedy this. The staff value training as opportunities to improve their practice and skills. The training programme does not yet meet Appendix 2 of the national minimum standards nor have sufficient staff completed NVQ at level 3.

The functioning of the home is continually monitored and action plans are in place to remedy any issues which arise. Visits under Regulation 33 are taking place each month and comprehensive reports are compiled. The manager signs that she monitors records in the home, carries out weekly audits and monthly reports. The home has a development plan to guide their improvement agenda.

Individual files are maintained for each of the young people which reflect their progress.

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 the home is maintained in a good state of repair (NMS 24)
- ensure that all staff receive supervision each month (NMS 28)
- ensure that a minimum ratio of all care staff have completed their NVQ at level 3 (NMS 29)
- ensure that staff receive training to meet Appendix 2 (NMS 31).