

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	26 April 2010
Inspector	Dawn Taylor
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	1 December 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 service accommodates up to five young people of either gender from 11 years to 18 years of age. The primary aim of the service is to provide a positive environment where young people can be supported to develop life skills and move on into independence. The majority of the young people who leave the home move on into their own property or supported living as they have reached the age of leaving care.

This service is located on the edge of a small town with access to good public transport systems. The accommodation provides for a progression from one of three bedrooms within the main house into one of two flats connected to the property.

Summary

This inspection was a full, unannounced inspection visit. The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution, economic well-being and organisation were assessed.

The outcome groups relating to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, positive contribution and organisation are judged to be good. Economic well-being is judged to be satisfactory.

Young people were present during the inspection and participated in the inspection process. In their view this service ranged from good to outstanding.

The staff team are providing a good professional service that provides semi-independent living in a supported environment. Young people are developing practical independent living skills and emotional maturity that support them to move into more independent settings.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Not applicable. This is the first inspection since registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are well supported to lead healthy lives. Staff help educate young people about the principles of a healthy lifestyle. Young people are encouraged to establish good habits. Young people's health needs are assessed and identified in individual healthcare plans. Staff are knowledgeable about individual needs and use every opportunity to engage young people in discussions about health and social issues. As part of the home's overall aims, staff encourage young people to take responsibility for and manage their own health and well-being.

The home's domestic routines and activities are organised in a way that supports coaching and mentoring opportunities in many areas such as budgeting and cooking. Staff approach daily tasks and routines with the aim of developing young people's awareness and knowledge about what it means to live independently. Young people are benefiting from living in a home that

is focused on achieving the best possible arrangements and outcomes for independent living. Young people stated that staff are 'very approachable and supportive'.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Effective systems are in place to safeguard young people and to promote their general well-being. The Registered Manager monitors the provision of care and takes action when necessary to improve safeguarding arrangements.

Young people's welfare is promoted by a staff team who work hard to educate them and increase their awareness and understanding of keeping themselves safe. Young people are well informed and know who they can approach for support and advice. Staff practice reflects clear written procedures and comprehensive training linked to the Local Safeguarding Children Board procedures. The safety of young people is given high priority by staff, who demonstrate a good understanding of the need to promote independence whilst managing risks. One young person stated 'I feel cared for and that I matter'.

The ethos of the service means that young people's privacy is respected and independence is celebrated. For example, young people can progress from having a bedroom in the main house into a self-contained flat. This progress is based on a young person's assessment and their ability to live independently; such a move afford young people greater privacy.

There is an effective complaints procedure and information about this is available to young people through their key worker and in written information. Young people know how to complain and can name a range of people they are confident to speak to. One young person stated 'staff are always there to listen to my problems and help me'.

Bullying is not identified as a problem at the home. Young people know that bullying is totally unacceptable and confirm that it is challenged on an individual and group basis when encountered. Staff are committed to ensuring that bullying in all its forms is addressed. Staff are successful at promoting mature behaviours in young people and when young people who have developed these skills are faced by young people new to the home who have not, the staff are effective at supporting them not to get involved.

Young people are further safeguarded by working protocols that have been agreed with the local police authority to support the correct response being made when vulnerable young people are found to be missing. Risk assessments clarify risk management strategies for young people who may go missing from care. When incidents occur they are appropriately reported.

The staff reinforce positive behaviour and this supports young people to develop self-esteem, self-belief and independent skills. Young people are encouraged and supported to behave in ways that will sustain them in the community once they have achieved independence. Staff are focused on providing behavioural boundaries that are fair and easily understood by young people. The focus of this service is to develop the individual's abilities to self regulate and as such sanctions and physical interventions are seen as a last resort. Young people acknowledge that a strength of this service is the relationships they develop with staff and their ability to negotiate and discuss issues that potentially might cause conflict.

Young people are living in a safely managed home where health and safety records and service certificates are up to date. Fire safety tests are undertaken within the appropriate timescales; a fire risk assessment has been completed and staff have received fire safety training. The manager reviews risk assessments on a regular basis or when new risks are identified, to ensure young people are being protected from hazards.

Young people are protected by robust recruitment procedures. Vetting checks are completed and staff only commence employment when they have a satisfactory Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosure and satisfactory references. All adults who visit the home are supervised appropriately by staff. This excellent practice ensures that young people are appropriately safeguarded.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are consulted about every aspect of their care and education as well as activities and social events. One young person stated 'staff support me with lifts, cheer me on at football matches and give me chances to try new things'. Young people are enabled to raise issues through formal structures such as house meetings and key worker sessions or informally over dinner or while out with staff. The opinions and views of young people are proactively taken into account when decisions affecting welfare and the development of the home are made.

Key strengths of this home are the positive relationships which staff develop with young people and the individual tailored support they receive as they approach the age to leave care. This service works in partnership with the young people, their families, social workers and other agencies in order to offer a structured and co-ordinated plan of care. Staff recognize that each young person is a unique individual and have their own specific needs. On admission each young person is allocated a key worker with whom they plan their independence training and progression towards adulthood.

Staff are positive in their approach to education and employment and its value for young people. Each young person's learning, training and development arrangements are different because the home accommodates some young people who have left school. Those young people are being supported and encouraged to access further education or work. Where young people are struggling to sustain attendance and engagement with their education programme staff work with teachers or other appropriate agencies to try and improve the situation.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

There are established procedures for supporting young people to move into and leave the home. These provide staff with clear guidance and practical options that ensure the most appropriate and sensitive approach can be implemented for each individual young person depending upon their circumstances.

Where possible, young people are able to move into the home in a planned and sensitive manner that makes them and their carers feel comfortable and welcome. The young person and carers have the opportunity to look at the accommodation, especially the individual's identified room or flat, which will have been made ready prior to their arrival.

Prior to arriving at a home information is gathered from the placing authority and previous placements. This information is used by staff to establish initial boundaries that ensure young people feel and are kept safe. Where difficulties are identified, risk assessments and strategies are reviewed and modified. Through the constant review of young peoples progress in relation to their placement plans the local authority and home's management team can ensure the on-going suitability of the placement.

Young people's contact arrangements are agreed and recorded so that all staff are clear about them. Staff recognise the importance that positive, constructive contact has to play with young people's sense of well-being and it's longer terms benefits.

The home has in place formal and informal mechanisms to consult with young people about areas that are important to them. Formal house meetings take place and also key workers meetings are regular to ensure that they seek and take account of the feelings and wishes of the young people.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The focus of this service is to support young people to develop the skills they will require to leave care and progress on into adulthood. Young people are provided with good practical training to ensure that they have the help that they need. This includes life skills training and increasing independence. However, this practical work is not reflected in written evidence in young people's files.

Since becoming registered last year as a stand alone children's home the home's management and staff team have begun to develop a specialist assessment pack and toolkit for promoting life skills and moving towards adulthood. The aim of this work is to further enhance outcomes for young people using this specialist provision.

On the whole the home is furnished and equipped to a good standard and feels welcoming and homely. The young people feel that they are able to make the home their own. The home's location, design and size are in keeping with its purpose and function. The home provides ample space for communal and individual activity, for young people to be creative and for relaxation. It also provides opportunities for young people to develop life skills and independence particularly through the option of utilising one of two flats that connect to the house. Damage to the home is promptly repaired by the company's maintenance team.

The Registered Manager has identified the need to undertake building work to separate the two staff sleep-in rooms. This work will afford staff privacy when on a sleep-in duty, which they do not currently have.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has an up-to-date Statement of Purpose and children's guide. Staff are aware of the principles and aims of the home and are positive and enthusiastic about their work. When young people are unsettled there are systems in place to monitor patterns and trends and review practice and strategies.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Evidence supports a consistent commitment to improving equality and diversity in practice. The quality and detail of young people's plans also supports this commitment. Staff receive training that helps them to understand the company's policies. This is linked to the legislation relating to equality and diversity and helps staff to develop professionally.

There is a competent staff team working at the home. There is a balance of males and females and consistency of staff used is good. There are effective systems in place so that there are opportunities for discussion about individual young people and the running of the home. This also helps to provide a consistent approach to the young people. Staff are sufficient in number to provide good care and quality time can be spent with individuals. There is a senior staff member on duty at all times. In addition there is always a senior manager on call and available to staff.

A key strength of this home is the emphasis on national vocational qualifications (NVQ) with over 80% of the staff team holding NVQ at level 3 in child care or higher. Good emphasis is given to staff training and development, which is focused on areas relating to young people's needs.

Practice and records are continually monitored by the home's Registered Manager through regulation 34 reports and by the regulation 33 visitor's reports. This ensures the Registered Manager is aware of the quality of practice in the home. Where there are shortfalls, the Registered Manager has taken corrective action.

Although the Registered Manager and staff team can clearly identify areas they are developing, the home does not have a written development plan.

The young people's files and records are well maintained and structured to provide easy access to information. Each young person's file contains the necessary information as detailed in schedule 3 of the children's homes regulations.

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
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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 there is a written development plan in place, that is reviewed annually. (NMS 33.5)