

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Katarina Djordjevic
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Date of last inspection	11 March 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 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 is a children's home run by a local authority. It provides care for two young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties between the age of 10 and 17 years. It is located in a city suburb and is within easy reach of community resources and facilities.

There is a lounge/diner, kitchen and toilet on the ground floor. On the first floor there are three bedrooms and a bathroom. Each young person has their own bedroom and the third bedroom is used as a staff office and sleep-in room. There are gardens to the front and rear of the home. Staffing is flexible depending on the needs of the young people. There is always a member of staff on sleep-in duty and on-call arrangements are in place.

Two young people were living at the home at the time of this inspection.

Summary

The home was registered in March 2010 as part of the local authority's re-organisation of residential provision for children and young people which effectively closed its larger children's homes to open small group homes. The staff team were already employed at homes that closed down as part of the reorganisation. This is the first inspection since registration and was a full unannounced inspection. The purpose of the visit was to assess the quality of care provided for young people, in line with statutory requirements. All key standards were inspected and standards 11, 15, 21, 28 and 32 were also inspected. The Registered Manager was not present during this inspection. The outcome groups relating to enjoying and achieving and positive contribution are judged as outstanding. Being healthy, staying safe, economic well-being and organisation were assessed and are judged as good.

This is a good service with many outstanding features. The Registered Manager provides strong leadership and support which has resulted in a consistent and committed staff team who provide a good quality of care for young people. Young people are able to make real progress whilst living at the home which helps to build up their confidence and self-esteem. Care records which are reviewed regularly are of a very good standard. Every effort is made by staff to enable young people to make positive contributions to their daily and future lives. Teaching and supporting young people with how to keep themselves safe is at the forefront of the care provided. Relationships between staff and young people are positive. Staff are skilled at enabling young people to change unacceptable behaviour and young people make real progress in this area. Effective quality assurance systems ensure that young people's needs are being met.

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.

Procedures are in place to ensure that medicines are appropriately handled and stored to safeguard young people's welfare. Records of medication administered and disposed of are

kept. However, where homely remedies are used, medication records do not always give the frequency that medication should be given.

Young people's health and well-being is actively promoted because staff are well informed about individual needs and receive a range of training which enables them to meet the health and cultural needs of young people. Staff training includes the safe handling of medication, emergency first aid, food hygiene and drug awareness. Young people's care records are of a good standard and clearly identify their physical and emotional health needs. Young people have access to a range of health advisory information. Staff work closely with other professionals to ensure young people's holistic needs are met. This includes regular consultations with health professionals who also attend the staff team meetings to discuss young people's needs and how best to support them. Young people are registered with a General Practitioner, dentist and optician as soon as is practically possible after admission.

Young people are consulted about the menus and enjoy a good range of meals within the home. The menus are varied and nutritious and meet the young people's individual preferences. Records are available of the differing meals being served which helps staff to monitor young people's diet. As part of their independence skills training, young people are expected to take part in the cooking of meals. A file is kept with information on healthy eating, nutrition and a range of recipes including recipes from different countries which helps young people with learning about healthy eating and how to cook. Theme nights have just been introduced which gives young people the opportunity to experience different cultural meals and learn about that particular country's traditions and culture.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Safeguarding young people is at the forefront of care practices at the home. A wide range of policies and staff training inform staff of how to protect young people from the risk of harm. At the same time, young people are supported to take risks in a controlled manner and take responsibility for their actions. This helps them learn how to keep themselves safe in preparation for adulthood and helps young people to build up their self-confidence. Young people feel safe living at the home and understand that policies, procedures and staff practice are there to keep them safe. Robust and effective monitoring systems help to ensure young people's need are being met and that they are safe. The home has detailed safeguarding policies and staff receive training in safeguarding children and young people. Staff understand their responsibilities in reporting any concerns, which helps to protect young people from the risk of harm or abuse.

Staff present as positive role models treating young people with dignity and respect. Young people said their privacy is respected and staff always knock on their bedroom doors and wait to be asked in. Young people are given keys to their rooms. There is a policy on room searches and where the need arises to search a room, detailed records are kept. Records are kept securely and staff are aware of the need to ensure discussions about young people take place where they cannot be overheard.

Young people have built up good relationships with staff. This and systems within the home make it easy for young people to raise any concerns they may have which helps to protect them from the risk of harm and abuse. There is a clear complaints procedure which is discussed with young people on admission and is also in the young people's welcome pack. Young people can

also complete 'grumble sheets' if they do not wish to use the formal complaints procedure. Young people also have access to an independent advocate. Records of complaints and grumbles are kept. No complaints or grumbles have been received since the home was registered.

Bullying is not tolerated at the home and this is made clear on admission to the home. High levels of staff supervision, the size and layout of the home reduces the likelihood of bullying being undetected. Young people said bullying is not an issue which is supported by records kept. Clear procedures and practices to deal with unauthorised absence help to protect young people from the risk of harm and abuse. Risk assessments are carried out for each young person. Young people have mobile phones and are actively encouraged to keep in contact with staff when they go out. There have been no incidents of unauthorised absence since the home was registered.

The management of behaviour is very good which is due to the skills of the staff team. Staff receive training in behaviour management and present as positive role models. The emphasis is on recognising and rewarding positive behaviour whilst at the same time supporting young people to develop socially acceptable behaviours in preparation for adulthood and being part of the wider community. Young people have behaviour management plans which help staff manage young people's behaviour consistently and safely. Young people are clear about what is expected of them and there are very clear boundaries set. As a result, young people make really good progress in this area and are able to change their behaviour. Restraint has not been used since the home was registered. Records of sanctions and rewards show that rewards and praise far outweigh sanctions imposed. Where sanctions are imposed these are fair and proportionate.

Young people are protected from the risk of harm or injury due to the effective management of health and safety in the home. Appropriate fire safety procedures and practices are in place which include: weekly testing of the fire alarm systems; regular servicing of the fire equipment; regular fire drills and explaining the fire evacuation procedure to young people on admission. Servicing of installations is carried out as required. Generic risk assessments are in place regarding the environment. Windows on the first floor are not fitted with window restrictors although the risk assessment refers to safety catches. This could pose a risk of harm or injury to young people.

Staff recruitment files were not available for inspection. However, there have been no changes to the recruitment policy and practices since the home was registered.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The ethos of the home is based on the belief and commitment of staff that young people should be given every opportunity to achieve their full potential in life. Young people are truly able to make progress in their lives whilst at the home which helps them feel valued and build up their self-esteem. Very good relationships exist between young people and staff which results from a culture of mutual respect and acceptance. Staff have an in-depth knowledge of young people's needs and as a result, young people receive a high level of care which takes into account their gender, religious, racial, cultural, disability and linguistic needs. Staff understand the importance of multi-agency working to ensure young people's holistic needs are met and work closely with relevant agencies. Individual risk assessments are carried out which helps

young people take controlled risks in a safe environment based on their age and abilities. Risk assessments are regularly reviewed.

Young people's education is seen as important and is actively promoted by staff. Young people receive education based on their individual needs with some young people attending mainstream schools and others accessing other educational facilities. The commitment and tenacity of staff has enabled young people to make real progress in terms of attending education and benefitting from this. This has involved close working with the educational establishments. Each young person has a personal education plan.

Young people's daily routine includes opportunities for free and controlled time including time for relaxation. Young people are provided with a range of activities which they enjoy and gives them opportunities to try new activities. The importance of friends and family is taken into account and the provision of activities does not prevent young people maintaining contact with family and friends. Risk assessments are in place for trips and outside activities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

All young people have individual files which contain looked after children documents, placement plans, action plans, risk assessments and case records. Placement plans and action plans are based on the five outcomes of Every Child Matters. Care records are of a very good standard and give clear details of individual needs and how to meet the needs. Young people are consulted about their placement plans and associated care records and are encouraged to sign their records. Care records are reviewed regularly which ensures young people's needs are being met and any additional needs are identified. Monthly placement plan appraisals are carried out which contribute to young people's statutory reviews. These records help to monitor young people's progress and highlight achievements as well as any difficulties experienced. Young people are actively encouraged to read and sign the appraisals. This has helped to build up young people's confidence and self-esteem as they are able to see the progress they are making. Staff give verbal feedback to social workers on a regular basis. Review meetings are held as required and minutes kept on file. Staff have worked hard to encourage young people to attend their review meetings so they can have a say in their future. As a result young people now attend their meetings.

Staff work hard, giving both practical and emotional support, to enable young people maintain family relationships where appropriate. Staff have been instrumental in helping young people improve their relationships with their families and as a result young people have more contact with their families and contact is a positive experience. Staff also recognise the importance of young people maintaining their friendships made at school and in the community and actively support young people to do this.

Admissions to the home are planned and careful consideration is given to ensure that the home can meet the needs of the young person and that they are compatible with the young people already living at the home. Detailed information is obtained prior to admission to help the assessment process. Staff try to ensure admission to the home is a smooth and welcoming experience for young people. Young people visit the home prior to moving in to look around the house and meet staff and other young people living at the home. This gives young people the opportunity to discuss any issues and gives them an insight into the running of the home. Young people are given the welcome booklet on admission and spend time with staff going

through the complaints and fire safety procedures, the no-smoking policy, and the house rules and what to expect.

Systems and staff practice actively encourage and support young people to make positive contributions to their daily lives and have a say about their future. Young people are consistently consulted about their care and hopes for the future. Young people say they feel listened to and this was evident throughout this inspection. Regular meetings are held with young people usually on a one to one basis to obtain young people's suggestions about the running of the home, trips and activities. Direct work sessions are also held regularly to give young people the opportunity to talk about the care they receive, discuss any worries or concerns they may have and reflect on any recent incidents. After a period of settling in the home, young people are given questionnaires to ascertain their views about the care they receive, what they think is good about the home and what could be better.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people are supported to gain skills in preparation for adulthood which is based on individual needs, taking into account a young person's age, abilities and previous experiences. Young people are able to take controlled risks in the community where appropriate and may have unsupervised free time where risk assessments permit. Young people are expected to help with the shopping and cooking and keep their bedrooms clean and tidy. Additionally, young people work through the 'independence skills for life' programme which covers all areas of independent living. Each young person has a file which contains work sheets, records of how they managed the task and information regarding independent living, for example supported lodgings; fire safety; nutrition and healthy eating.

There are clear systems for accessing pocket money and other allowances for clothing and toiletries which young people fully understand. Young people are supported to maintain their individuality and personal preferences in terms of clothing and personal requisites.

Young people benefit from living in a comfortable environment and the home presents as an ordinary domestic property. The home is clean and decorated and furnished to a good standard. Young people are consulted in choosing the décor and furniture in the home which gives them a sense of belonging and respect for their environment. They are actively encouraged to personalise their bedrooms.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home's Statement of Purpose contains all the information required in Schedule 1 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. This informs young people, their families and placing authorities about the services provided by the home. The Statement of Purpose accurately reflects the practice and registration conditions of the home. The young people's welcome booklet is given to all young people either prior to or on admission to the home. The booklet informs young people about life at the home, what they can expect and what is expected of them and local facilities.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Staff receive a range of training on equality and diversity including cultural diversity, anti-discriminatory practice and disability discrimination.

This helps staff understand and promote difference. Care and support provided is tailored to meet individual needs based on regular individual assessments. Young people are enabled to have different experiences and opportunities to promote their quality of life. Staff are in the process of further developing opportunities for young people to learn about difference and have experience of different cultures.

The Registered Manager provides clear direction and leadership and provides an excellent role model for the staff team and young people. The staff team are well-trained, competent and committed to improving the quality of care provided to young people. Staffing levels reflect the needs of the young people. As a result, young people receive a good level of care and are able to make real progress at the home. Staff feel well supported by the Registered Manager and receive regular supervision from members of the management team. Staff meetings are held regularly and are used also for in-house training. Team development sessions have been held to help the newly formed staff team work effectively as a team and to ensure all staff are clear about their roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

The care of young people is continuously monitored through a range of effective quality assurance systems. The Registered Manager checks and signs records on a regular basis and produces a monthly report as required. Where shortfalls are identified these are addressed promptly. Quality assurance questionnaires are given to young people after they have been at the home for a while to find out their views about the care they receive and what improvements they would like to see. The Regulation 33 reports support the internal quality assurance systems. Visits are carried out monthly by representatives of the local authority and the reports are sent to Ofsted as required.

Young people's files contain the required information as detailed in Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001, to inform staff about the needs of young people and how to meet their needs.

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 the frequency of administering homely remedies medication is recorded on the medication record (NMS 13)
- review the risk assessment regarding the possible hazards presented by the windows on the first floor. (NMS 26)