

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Helen Walker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	23 December 2008
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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 home provides care and accommodation for up to five young people of either gender, aged from eight years old up to 17 years old. The home is a detached property in a residential area in the town. It is close to schools, shops and leisure facilities. There are good public transport links to neighbouring towns and cities.

The service has individual bedrooms used by young people and two of these have en-suite bathroom facilities and there is a house bathroom on the first floor. On the ground floor there is a lounge and a games room off the dining kitchen. The staff and manager's offices are also on the ground floor. The two bedrooms used by staff who sleep-in are on the first and second floors. To the side and front of the house is a patio with an established garden area.

There are three young people living in this home. All were present for some part of the inspection and participated in the inspection process.

Summary

At this full, unannounced inspection, all the key national minimum standards were inspected. The actions made at the previous inspection were followed up and details of these are outlined in the improvement section of this report.

Young people are well-looked after and good arrangements allow for contact with relevant professional agencies, such as health and police. Although there are times when young people are missing from the home, the staff take all reasonable steps to keep young people safe from harm.

A caring and consistent staff team provides young people with continuity of care throughout their stay in the home. Young people like the staff who look after them. Not all young people receive full time formal education but learning is seen as an important part of their lives and staff are proactive to support this.

Actions and a recommendation to ensure the young people's welfare is fully promoted have been made. These relate to the recording of medication, the effectiveness of sanctions and the maintenance of some parts of the home.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, an action was made to ensure there is an accurate and up to date record of measures of control used in the home. That the Regulation 33 visitor inspects the home's daily log of events and record of any complaints. Also, for the provider to obtain relevant employment history of new staff before they start work in the home.

The provider has taken steps to address all of these matters so that the young people's welfare is safeguarded and their well-being is promoted.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are significantly involved in menu planning and choice of food for meals. They take an active role in shopping, preparation and cooking of meals in the home. Young people said staff encourage them to eat healthily and that snacks, such as fresh fruit, are always available. Additionally, individual diets are well-met and particular foods are bought as requested, for example, Halal meat is purchased.

The young people's health needs are positively promoted. Young people are registered with the usual primary health care services so that their routine health needs are met. Information available in the home and contact with health professionals and agencies, provides young people with exceptionally good advice and guidance about health matters. This includes details about sexual health and smoking cessation, which increases young people's knowledge and understanding about the benefits of a healthy lifestyle.

The home has guidance in place for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medicines. However, staff do not always sign the records to show the administration of medication. This means accurate information is not detailed for future reference. Staff are qualified to administer first aid treatment as needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is maintained in the home. For example, young people have individual bedrooms and access to a telephone that can be used without reference to staff.

An effective complaints process means young people have the opportunity to raise issues that they are unhappy with. Complaints are taken seriously and dealt with thoroughly and efficiently by management. Staff have a good understanding about countering bullying. Young people confirm there are no issues of bullying in the home at this time.

Staff take all reasonable steps to keep young people safe from harm and know how to respond in the event of any allegation or serious concern about a young person's safety. Staff have training to assist them to care for and to promote the welfare of young people, for example, if concerns arise from sexual exploitation.

There are times when young people go missing from the home. However, consistent monitoring and appropriate liaison with child protection professionals assists staff to safeguard the young people and encourages them to return to the home.

Young people's good behaviour is actively encouraged. Training in techniques to manage challenging behaviour helps staff to manage young people's behaviour positively. Although sanctions are in place for inappropriate behaviour, these are not routinely monitored by the manager to demonstrate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the action taken.

Systems are in place, to enable young people to be cared for in a safe, physical environment. Checks, such as those that relate to fire safety, the use of electrical equipment and gas appliances, occur routinely to ensure the safety of people in the house.

Recruitment and employment procedures establish the suitability of staff to work with young people. Relevant checks including those from the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) are in place before staff start work in the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home has well-established links with a range of agencies, for example, health professionals and the Youth Offending Team, to provide young people with a consistent level of support from more specialist services. Staff are knowledgeable about the young people's individual needs and provide them with opportunities for discussion about a broad range of issues including, sexuality, health and smoking cessation. Young people said they really like the home and can talk to staff, especially their key-workers.

Education is seen as an important part of young people's lives and staff are proactive to encourage young people to attend school. Although young people do not currently receive education in a formal school setting, the home actively assists them with education and has a programme of learning in place. This includes life-skills for leaving care, rooms and books in the home for study, a computer with internet access, staff support and that of the home's learning coordinator.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have individual placement plans to identify their assessed needs and to show how staff are to meet these in the home. Opportunities are available for young people to have input into their placement plans and this is through discussion with staff and more formally, through the statutory review process. Staff are knowledgeable and aware of the plans, which helps them to provide good care to the young people.

The home has well-established systems to review young people's care and placement plans. Young people say they are listened to and have the opportunity to attend their review meetings. This allows them to have their say about care in the home and plans for their future.

Young people's contact with family and friends is actively promoted and this is done in line with the young person's placement plan. The promotion of contact means young people continue to have positive links with those who are important to them outside of the home.

Admissions to the home are planned and wherever possible involve a visit by the young person to meet staff and view the home. Where admissions are at short notice, the staff spend time discussing the placement with the young person to ensure they are familiar with the routines of the home. Staff try to ensure young people are adequately prepared for leaving the home and that this is through a planned ending to the placement.

Young people have opportunities in the home to give their opinions about issues that affect their daily life and future. For example, they have choices in the food menu and decoration for their bedrooms. Young people have individual time with staff and contact with professionals outside of the home. This level of consultation helps to improve young people's quality of life.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff encourage young people to learn and develop skills to help them as they move towards leaving care. Good advice and support is given about educational opportunities and practical matters, such as housekeeping, cooking and budgeting money. Staff are keen to ensure young people have the support they need from their placing authority. To this end they actively pursue formal Pathway Plans, so that suitable and agreed arrangements are in place to plan for their future away from the home.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation that is decorated and furnished to a good standard. However, parts of the home, such as some of the floor tiles in the hallway and bathroom wall tiles are broken, which distracts from the overall pleasant appearance of the home. Facilities in the home provides young people with their own bedroom for privacy and includes the availability of other rooms in which to see their family, friends and social workers.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a statement of purpose giving details about the care provided. This was recently updated to reflect changes in the staffing policy. Young people have written and verbal information about the routines of the home so that they are familiar with care practices.

Young people benefit from being looked after by a consistent and caring staff team. Six of the eight care staff have a relevant childcare qualification. This helps to equip them with knowledge and understanding about looking after young people who use this service. Young people said they know the staff who work in the home and because they like it here, then it makes it one of the best placements they have had.

There are adequate levels of staffing to supervise and take account of the young people's known needs. Any additional duty shifts are covered by permanent staff and on some occasions by bank staff. This means agency staff are not used in the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Care practices and staff training promotes a commitment in the home to equality and diversity. Various training courses, such as child development and anti-discriminatory practice increases staff skills and competency in their work with the young people.

There are good systems in place to monitor the performance of the home against its statement of purpose, for example, the Regulation 33 monthly visitor report and the manager's report. This gives the manager an overview of how the home is running and brings to light any issues that require action to be taken.

Documentation relating to young people's individual history and progress is kept in good order. Their files contain all the necessary information for staff to provide the appropriate care and to meet the needs of the young people.

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
13	make suitable arrangements for the recording and safe administration of any medicines received into the home (Regulation 21.1)	9 June 2009
22	ensure records show the effectiveness and consequences of the use of any sanction or physical restraint (Regulation 17.4).	9 June 2009

Recommendations

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

- maintain the interior of the home in good repair (NMS 24.3).