

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	30 July 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 small children's home offers placements for two young people who may have a combination of mental health, psychological, emotional or complex care needs that present challenging behaviour. The registered provider's service is designed to offer medium to long-term care placements. The home's programme of care generally incorporates a structured balance of education, recreation and therapeutic interventions tailored to meet individual needs although the small scale of the home permits sufficient flexibility to adjust to changing placement circumstances.

Care is provided in terraced cottage-style house in a semi-urban location. It has the benefit of easy access to the comprehensive range of recreational and leisure amenities locally and in the expanding new town. The house has been modernised and refurbished to offer a good quality living environment with individual rooms for young people.

Summary

This was a key unannounced inspection that concentrated on all of the key national minimum standards. At the time of this inspection only one young person was living in the home who was temporarily present but did not actively participate in the process.

The inspection focussed on areas relating to health needs, keeping young people safe, education and how individual support is provided. The inspection looked at how young people are consulted, how care is planned and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the home.

The home is judged as satisfactory with several good features. Young people receive an individualised care package that is flexible enough to adapt to quickly changing needs while keeping them safe. Access to local authority education is actively supported. The Registered Manager provides direction and leadership to the small staff team. Staff are clear about their roles and consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the specific needs of young people in their care.

This inspection identifies the need for minor improvement in health and safety compliance and management monitoring to fully confirm compliance with the national minimum standards.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

This is the first inspection of this home following its registration.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The small scale of this home allows young people considerable choice and ability to contribute to menu planning and food preparation. Staff support young people with information that helps their understanding of what constitutes a balanced diet and healthy eating. Staff receive training in basic food hygiene to pass on good practice to young people.

The health and psychological needs of young people are identified before and during admission and recorded using formal health plans. Staff at the home work to ensure that these needs of young people are practically addressed in an age-appropriate and focussed manner. Young people are quickly registered with local health professionals and staff support attendance at health appointments. Young people are given informed advice, about healthy living, medical wellbeing, emotional and sexual health matters consistent with assessed needs and level of understanding to help young people protect themselves from different forms of harm. Wherever necessary this guidance is given in conjunction with young people's guardians, health professionals and placing authority social workers.

Young people are provided with safe care as all staff are trained in first aid and the administration of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

By following the registered provider's policies and procedures the welfare and physical safety of young people is promoted. Policies have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection that include countering bullying, behaviour management, dealing with missing persons and ensuring young people are kept safe. Procedures are tested in practice as they conform with the requirements of the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Statutory training informs and equips staff to care for young people safely helping to ensure that young people are protected.

Young people's privacy is respected because their personal information is securely stored and kept confidential. Staff are sensitive about how and what they communicate with other professionals. Young people have access to a private telephone and are permitted to have a mobile phone. Young people have their own lockable bedrooms and made aware of the circumstances when these may need to be searched.

Young people know how to raise any complaint and are encouraged to make staff aware of any concerns they may have. The provider's complaints policy is summarised in the young person's guide for their easy reference. Although the home has formal policies and procedures, concerns are usually effectively addressed long before they become a complaint. External concerns are dealt with by the provider quickly and transparently to avoid any adverse impact on young people residing at the home. No formal complaints have been received since the home began operating. Young people are provided with access to independent representatives such as their placing authority social workers or advocates from a nationally recognised advocacy organisation to ensure their voice can be heard.

Young people are always expected to present socially acceptable behaviour and respond positively to the boundaries set by normal living. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management and physical intervention but the occupancy and assessed staffing levels of the home supports its use being unnecessary. Young people are aware of the expectations being made from them prior to moving to the home and are encouraged to adhere to the house rules. The staff team understand the range of challenging behaviours individual young people may present and how these may be effectively addressed. Positive relationships between staff and young people allow relatively low staffing levels to operate the home safely in a relaxed homely environment. Any behavioural incidents are evaluated by the home's Manager. Views and

opinions of young people are always taken into account in relation to any sanction to improve the transparency and effectiveness of staff practice.

The home demonstrates its awareness of potential dangers to young people through risk assessing all aspects of safety in the living environment, for example, the risk from fire and hazards that include risk from individuals behaviour and activities. Young people new to the home have not always been involved in fire evacuations and this omission potentially compromises how young people are kept safe.

There are effective procedures in place for the monitoring of visitors to the home. The provider's recruitment and selection process indicates that while the policy for appointing new staff is thorough and includes the need for a current Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff practically demonstrate a good understanding and awareness of child development and how to help young people understand and moderate some of their difficult and unsafe behaviour. This small home looks after young people who have the need for a safe, facilitating, community based environment that provides consistency of support, positive adult nurturing, explicit behavioural boundaries and in some cases access to mental health resources.

The home aims to assist young people's compliance with expectations, self-confidence and practical abilities in accordance with their care and placement plan. Young people are assisted to access both in-house and community based activities that help develop particular interests and skills, promote self-esteem and are age-appropriate and safe. The staff team try to stimulate young people's positive awareness of gender issues, diversity, inclusion and tolerance both within the home and the wider community.

Although the company have access to a private education facility as an interim measure they also help to practically support young people who are being managed in mainstream school placements. Active liaison between home and school and support for the young person to get to school helps promote regular attendance and achievement.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Admissions to the home, even those made in an emergency are assessed and well planned between placing authorities and the provider. At an early stage young people are invited to contribute their views about moving into the home. Care planning is effective because young people are provided with an in-house placement plan, that identifies the purpose of the placement and how the placing authority's expectation are to be achieved. Young people are encouraged to actively contribute to the contents and success of their plan by adhering to the outlined expectations. The progress of placement plans is kept under review by early statutory looked after children (LAC) reviews for emergency admissions and informally every fortnight by the home's own reviewing procedures. Ongoing consultation between the home with individual young people and the placing authority social workers helps in the achievement of the placement aims.

Young people's plans are discussed by the staff regularly to ensure that they accurately reflect the care being provided and record those changes considered necessary to improve how care is delivered and young people are kept safe. The registered provider's recording follows the Every Child Matters outcomes format to enable outcomes to be monitored.

Young people are practically supported to maintain contact with their families where this is permitted by the arrangements detailed within their care plans. These plans make explicit the authorised arrangements for contact between young people, their family, friends and professional workers such as social workers. In keeping with the young people's plans the owning of a mobile phone and unsupervised home visits can be goals confirming trust and developing self-responsibility.

Young people are supported and encouraged to express their views and opinions about all aspects of the home. The young persons' guide provides information about the advocacy services and independent persons available to them if they need to speak to someone about their care.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home provides care for young people in a traditional terraced cottage style family house. The home's location is within easy reach of the local town centre and has convenient access to nearby recreation, leisure and educational facilities that can assist a young person to integrate into the wider community.

The property provides homely, and well-maintained accommodation for young people who benefit from living in smaller numbers. The home includes a lounge, two young people's bedrooms, a kitchen, utility, dining room, bathroom, WCs on both floors, staff office and a staff sleep-in room. The home is decorated and furnished to a good standard providing young people with sufficient space for relaxation, recreation, education and a degree of privacy. The garden provides a private outdoor green space including some practical outbuildings. It is separated from safe, off-road parking for vehicles by a fence and gate that increases the homes domestic security.

Where age appropriate, preparation can be made for young people to eventually leave care by helping them practise and acquire the skills needed for adulthood as a component part of their daily routine. Additional life skills to those learned through everyday living are learnt through participation with staff involved with the task of running the home, such as shopping, cooking and undertaking household chores such as tidying personal space and bedrooms. Where leaving care is not a planned option young people are helped to accept and understand the transition to any new placement.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose for the home includes all of the information prescribed by Schedule 1 of the Children's Home Regulations. This has been made available for the placing authority to consider the scope of the service offered by the registered provider at this small home. The young persons' guide provides a useful source of information for those young people placed at the home.

Young people living in the home are supported with every aspect of their daily living by the small team of experienced and trained staff who practically demonstrate their commitment to providing safe and consistent care. The qualified Registered Manager supports staff by giving guidance and access to professional development opportunities. Staff have attended induction and statutory training to help them provide care for a range of behavioural and emotional needs. The home is committed through ongoing training to meeting National Vocational Qualification requirements within it's staff team.

Staffing rota's confirm the complement of staff available for the home. The rota effectively covers all shifts and night duty with both waking and sleeping-in staff when needed. Shortfalls in the home's rota are currently covered by in-house staff deployed in another of the registered providers' homes. The arrangements for safe one-to-one work with young people remain subject to constant review informed by ongoing individual risk assessments to ensure the safety of both young people and staff.

The registered person has a process to monitor the operational efficiency and quality of care being provided by the home, however not all records have been confirmed as accurate by the manager's signature. Monthly monitoring, through the use of a Regulation 33 visitor, confirms that the home is operating within the scope of its Statement of Purpose.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive an individualised service in a home local to their community, chosen to provide a bespoke package of care befitting age, ability and potential risk. All staff have a good knowledge of the young people they are working with, including their cultural and disability background, which helps ensure that holistic needs are being addressed as far as is possible in this domestic setting. The home has developed explicit policies and procedures promoting equality and diversity in all aspects of their service for children from differing cultures and heritage.

Young people's individual case files are stored and arranged in a manner that are readily accessible to staff while maintaining confidentiality. Young people are made aware of the contents of their files and know they can request access to them should they need to.

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 a fire evacuation test that includes children is regularly conducted (NMS 26.7)
- ensure that all incident reports are consistently signed off by the Registered Manager (NMS 33.1, 33.2)