

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Nicola McEvinney
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	7 October 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 children's home accommodates up to seven young people aged from 12 to 17 years.

The building is detached and set in its own grounds. Accommodation is spread over four floors. The bedrooms and shared bathrooms are on the upper floors. On the ground floor, there is a staff office, kitchen, dining room and lounge. To the rear of the home there is an enclosed garden, which incorporates a five-a-side football pitch and a floodlit games area. The home is located within a short distance of a number of schools and other youth, health and leisure facilities.

Summary

The purpose of this unannounced full inspection was to assess the home's performance against the national minimum standards.

This is a well-managed home with an experienced staff team who are committed to provide a good level of care to the young people. The staff have an open approach to the young people, who have free access to the office, and relationships were seen to be nurturing and of mutual respect. Young people's health needs are well met and there are measures in place to ensure young people are safe. The promotion of education is a priority and the home access a number of services to help meet the needs of the young people.

The requirement and recommendation made at this inspection relate to implementing the hot water testing policy and to help young people develop self-help skills.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

There were no requirements or recommendations made at the last inspection.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with healthy and nutritious meals. Some individuals are on a supported independent living scheme where they are given monies to buy their own food. These young people plan a menu and shop and prepare their own meals within a supported environment. All the young people have free access to the kitchen and are able to make drinks and snacks at any time; fresh fruit is readily available.

Young people's health needs are well attended to. A number of young people smoke cigarettes and indulge in cannabis use. Staff are proactive in addressing this with the young people and use strategies to make the purchase of these substances difficult. All young people are registered with doctors, dentists and opticians and they are encouraged to attend appointments.

Medication records are in good order; most of the young people self-medicate, although, staff do remind individuals when their medication is due. All staff have attended first aid training

ensuring the young people are cared for by competent people in the event of a minor accident occurring.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

All young people keep the key to their own bedroom. Young people's files are kept securely ensuring confidentiality.

The home maintains a 'moans and groans' log where young people can make representation. These are responded to appropriately to the young people's satisfaction. Information is available regarding a children's rights organisation, who may act as an advocate for young people, and organisations where individuals can take complaints further if they are not happy.

All staff have attended safeguarding training and have a good awareness of this issue. Staff are vigilant in responding to safeguarding concerns. Computers are sited to enable staff to supervise young people ensuring inappropriate sites are not accessed.

Staff acknowledge that there is some bullying behaviours presented by some individuals; although they are proactive in protecting young people. The home has an anti-bullying champion and there is training planned for the staff team to ensure that they have a good awareness of this issue. Young people confirm that staff do address bullying behaviour with individuals and they feel safe in the home.

None of the young people stay away from the home overnight although there are a few occasions where some individuals fail to return to the home when expected. There are individual protocols in place advising staff what action to take when this occurs.

Relationships between staff and young people are based on mutual respect. There have been no restraints since the last inspection. A number of sanctions have been imposed and these are appropriate. There have been occasions where young people have challenged the sanctions imposed. Staff have reviewed these and amended the sanctions appropriately. This is good practice and demonstrates that staff behave fairly. Care plans demonstrate flexibility and give guidance to the staff team if a young person is unsettled at night, offering strategies to prevent disruption. Behaviour management plans are in place which set out triggers to behaviours with strategies identified to prevent behaviours escalating.

Risk assessments are in place for individuals, the premises and activities. These clearly identify the risk with strategies in place to minimise the risk. Health and safety checks are carried out as appropriate. However, policy with regard to the water temperature testing is not followed in all cases, which could lead to a young person inadvertently scalding themselves. Fire records are in good order with fire drills held regularly including at night ensuring all staff know what action to take in the event of a fire.

Although there have not been any new appointments made to this home the recruitment files of all new staff employed in the residential services were seen at the human resources department. The local authority has robust systems in place to ensure only suitable people are employed in their homes. The identity of all visitors to the home is checked and they are requested to sign in.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The home has access to services that help meet the needs of the young people. For example, the Youth Offending Team works with some individuals who are in the criminal justice system. The children and adolescent mental health service works with some individuals and a member from this team attends a staff meeting monthly to help staff explore strategies in managing some young people's behaviour. The looked after children nurse is available for support and advice and undertakes annual health needs assessments. A community youth project police officer is a regular visitor to the home and speaks to the young people. The home has regular sessions from sexual health mentors, this is a peer group initiative that is well received by the young people. Some young people access a drug and alcohol worker to help them address smoking cigarettes and substance misuse. Each young person has a key worker and a co-key worker. As far as possible, consideration is given to ensure that there is compatibility in the allocation of these individuals to ensure specific needs are addressed. Staff are also supportive to young people in their chosen lifestyle. Staff work with young people to promote socially acceptable behaviours, for example appropriate table manners. Black young people are referred to the Black cases panel to ensure their specific needs are addressed.

All established young people have been in some form of educational placement and do generally well with some individuals expecting to achieve GCSE's. However, there are some individuals who refuse to attend on some days which jeopardises them achieving their potential. The home is proactive in securing educational placements for new young people and encourage those young people who are no longer in full time education to attend schemes over the summer to ensure that they have some day time occupation. Staff have been good advocates for young people in the looked after system and have lobbied councillors to secure apprenticeships with the local authority for young people leaving the care system. This has had some success.

The young people are of an age where they arrange their own free time. However, the home supports young people to access local facilities, for example the local gym, swimming baths and the cinema. Some individuals have successfully completed a 'Coast to Coast' cycle ride and are to attend a 'Champions Challenge' which involves walking, cycling and climbing one or two peaks. Over the summer vacation some individuals will be attending activity or performing arts holidays.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's care plans are stored electronically and all staff including agency and ancillary staff have appropriate access to ensure relevant information is available all times. Some young people have leaving care plans. All young people have an individual development plan which sets out their needs with guidance to staff to show how these needs are to be met.

Statutory child care reviews are held as appropriate. The home produces a report for the review detailing the progress of the young person. Young people are encouraged to attend their review meeting. However, where individuals are reluctant, the reviewing officer will have a meeting with the young person to ensure that their views are heard.

Young people are of an age where they arrange their own contact, however files contain clear contact arrangements.

Young people leave the home to live independently; either in their own accommodation or in a supported living environment. There is a clear expectation that young people will receive ongoing support from the staff and individuals are encouraged to maintain contact with the home. Prior to any admission, a detailed assessment is undertaken on the suitability of the prospective admission to ensure compatibility.

House meetings are held regularly and young people confirm that staff listen to them. Young people are encouraged to be involved in the children in care council and the local authority's young people's parliament. The home also organises six-monthly service user questionnaires to ascertain young people's views.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

A number of young people are on a supported independent living scheme and plan a menu, go shopping and prepare their meals within a supported environment. All young people are responsible for their own laundry. Although this is very useful for young people this independence training does not include them gaining other skills necessary for them to be successful in living independently. Leaving care plans are in place.

The home is well maintained and pleasantly decorated creating a homely environment for the young people.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home produces a detailed Statement of Purpose giving clear information of what services the home has to offer. The young people's guide is also a very comprehensive document and sets out what young people can expect when they come to live at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people have their individual needs identified and strategies are in place to ensure that these needs are met. The management team have attended equalities and diversity training and anti-oppressive practice is a standing item on the staff meeting agenda ensuring a good awareness of this issue. Black young people have their cases referred to the Black cases panel for consideration to ensure their needs in relation to culture and identity are addressed.

All staff have either attained a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level 3 in caring for children and young people, or are registered on this course. The management team have attained NVQ at level 4 or equivalent. There are good training opportunities for the staff team. For example, staff have attended managing allegations, managing behaviour refresher courses, embracing diversity, substance misuse and child mental health and safe handling of medicines. This ensures that young people are cared for by a competent staff team.

There are adequate numbers of staff on duty; any shortfall in the rota is covered by two regular agency workers who are familiar to the young people and the home's routines, ensuring a consistent approach is maintained.

There are good systems in place to monitor how the home operates.

Young people's files are stored electronically and there is comprehensive information regarding their history.

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
26	ensure that all parts of the home which young people have access to are so far as reasonably practical free from hazards to their safety.(Regulation 23 (a))	31 August 2010

Recommendations

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

- prepare young people for leaving care by developing practical, daily life knowledge and skills. (NMS 6.6)