

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Parker
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Date of last inspection	12 February 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 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 a 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 full unannounced key inspection. Two young people live at the home one of whom was present during the inspection and made a limited contribution to the process. The inspection focused on all of the Every Child Matters outcome areas.

The home is judged as satisfactory with many examples of good practice. Young people receive an individualised care package that is sufficiently flexible to adapt to changing needs and is effective in addressing behaviour to promote health and well-being. The home is well decorated and maintained providing a homely environment in which young people are provided with safe boundaries and enabled to develop. The registered person provides competent direction and leadership to an enthusiastic, trained staff team thereby enabling a good quality of care to young people. Staff are clear about their roles and are consistent in carrying out their responsibilities to address the care needs of the young people they look after.

Two actions and one recommendation are made at this inspection, highlighting the need for effective recording of aspects of safe care and staff support.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection the registered provider was recommended to ensure that regular fire evacuation drills, which included children, were conducted and to ensure that all incident report forms were signed off as being correct by the homes manager. On this visit it is noted that fire evacuation drills have not been evidenced and this shortfall, which could compromise a young persons safety has been made a regulatory action. Incident reports are now being completed by the homes manager.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The children's home promotes considerable choice and involvement with menu planning and food preparation. Young people are provided with information that helps their understanding

of healthy eating and what constitutes a balanced diet. Training in basic food hygiene equips staff to pass on good practice to young people. Mealtimes are social occasions where young people and their carers can participate together.

Young people's health and well-being is promoted because health and psychological needs of young people are identified as an important component informing the admission process. Formal health plans record these needs and determine how they will be addressed. Staff ensure that health needs of young people are acted upon in an age appropriate and focused manner. Young people are registered with local health professionals and supported when attending any health related appointments. Young people are provided with informed advice, about healthy living, medical well-being, emotional and sexual health matters consistent with their level of understanding. This practical information and guidance helps young people to protect themselves from different forms of potential harm.

Child centred care is provided by staff who are trained in first aid and the safe administration of medication.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

The registered provider's policies and procedures promote the welfare and physical safety of young people. These have been developed to comply with regulatory requirements and good practice in areas of child protection, countering bullying, behaviour management and dealing with missing persons. Procedures have been tested in practice and conform to 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 and kept safe.

The reporting format for unauthorised absences by young people from the home does not confirm that on return they have the opportunity to talk with an independent person. This detracts from the transparency of the policy and young people's accountability for their behaviour.

The privacy of young people is being respected by personal information being securely stored and kept confidential. Staff are sensitive about how and what they can communicate with other professionals. Young people have access to a private telephone and are permitted to own 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 complaints policy is summarised in the young person's guide for their easy reference. Although the registered provider has formal policies and procedures that can be used, in practice concerns are routinely addressed long before they become a complaint. Concerns emerging from outside of the home are well recorded and dealt with by the provider quickly. Young people are provided with access to independent representatives such as their placing authority social workers or representatives from a nationally recognised advocacy organisation to ensure their views are given a voice and listened to.

The home has an overt expectation that young people behave in a socially acceptable manner and respond appropriately to the clear boundaries set by normal living. To help maintain stability in the home, staff receive regular training in behaviour management and physical intervention.

Occupancy and assessed staffing levels in the home reflect the minimal use of these techniques with the present residents. Young people are aware of the house rules prior to moving in and are encouraged to adhere to them. The staff team understand the range of challenging behaviours individual young people may present and how these can be deflected or addressed. Generally positive relationships between all staff and young people allow the relatively low staffing levels to operate the home safely and promote a relaxed homely atmosphere. All behavioural incidents are evaluated by the home's manager. Views and opinions of young people are always engaged in relation to any sanction to improve the effectiveness of staff practice and good order in the home.

The registered provider demonstrates an awareness of the range of potential dangers to young people. This is achieved by risk assessing all aspects of safety in the living environment. For example, the risk from fire and environment and those related to individual's behaviour and activities. The homes records do not presently confirm that young people have been involved in fire evacuations and this omission potentially compromises how young people are being kept safe.

Young people are protected from outside risks by effective procedures being in place for the monitoring of all visitors to the home. The provider's recruitment and selection process confirms that the policy for selecting and appointing new staff is thorough and includes the need for a current Criminal Records Bureau check.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff show their understanding and awareness of child development in practice by helping 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. This 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. For example on this visit one young person was undertaking a Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition. 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.

The registered provider initiates access to a private education facility as an interim measure while practically supporting young people to integrate into or need support whilst 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. Where young people are beyond statutory school age staff promote access to further education or employment opportunities.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The home prioritises the immediate needs of individual young people on their admission. For example, although one young person is of an age where it is appropriate for leaving care preparatory plans to be made, the initial placement goals are for placement stability. How this is being achieved is well recorded, identifying a gradual but marked improvement in behaviour and compliance.

How individual needs are met both within the small group and individually, are noted within reports compiled by the care staff that usefully contribute to regular statutory reviews of the placement.

Young people have their contact arrangements facilitated by the home, where they are in accord with the placing authorities care plans. Young people are supported with transport and supervision where appropriate when they visit their families. They can have regular telephone contact. For the safety of young people all contact is recorded.

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 expectations are to be achieved. Young people are encouraged to contribute to the contents and success of their plan by adhering to the identified aims. The progress of placement plans is kept under review by early statutory looked after children reviews for emergency admissions, and informally every fortnight by the home's own reviewing procedures. Ongoing consultation between care staff, young people, special support services and the placing authority social workers helps promote the realistic achievement of the placement aims.

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

Young people are encouraged to express their views and opinions about all aspects of the home in different ways. 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. Weekly children's meetings are held with staff that record how day plans are developed and what specific issues concern young people.

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 provide young people with opportunities to integrate into the wider community.

The property is homely, clean and well-maintained providing discrete accommodation for young people who benefit from living in smaller numbers. The home features a lounge, a kitchen, utility, dining room, two young people's bedrooms, bathroom, toilets on both floors, staff office and 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 an enclosed 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 is made for young people for eventually leaving care by acquiring and practicing the skills needed for adulthood as an integral part of their daily routine. Additional life skills to those learned through everyday living are learnt through direct 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 understand plans for transition to a future 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 is made available to inform placing authority of the scope of the versatility and service offered by the registered provider at this small home. The child friendly format young persons' guide provides a useful source of information for those young people placed at the home.

Young people residing in the home are well supported with every aspect of their daily living by the 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 to meet National Vocational Qualification requirements through ongoing training for its staff team. Staff supervision does not currently fully meet national minimum standards, undermining staff competence and compromising evidence of practical staff support.

The staffing rota confirms an appropriate complement of staff is available for the home. The rota effectively covers all shifts and night duty with both waking and sleeping-in staff when needed. The deployment of staff across all the organisations homes provides staff with a broad range of practical experience enabling the rapid development of social care skills. Any shortfalls in the home's rota, such as those caused by sickness or leave can be covered by in-house staff deployed in another of the registered providers' homes. The arrangements for safe one-to-one work with young people during daytime and night duty 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. Monthly monitoring, through the use of a Regulation 33 visitor, confirms that the home is operating within the scope of its Statement of Purpose. A corporate development plan outlines the future aspirations of the registered provider's homes confirming this homes continued operation.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people receive an individualised service in a home that can adapt quickly to individual needs and 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 is readily accessible to staff while maintaining confidentiality. The layout of files confirms that practice is outcome focused. 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
26	ensure that a fire evacuation test includes children and is regularly conducted & recorded (Regulation 32(1) (c) (iii))	20 September 2010
28	ensure that all staff receive at least one and a half hours of one-to-one supervision from a senior member of staff at the frequency set out by the national minimum standards each month. (Regulation 27)	20 September 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that on return to the home, the child is seen, if possible, by a person independent of the home to consider the reasons for the absence without authority (national minimum standard 19.4)