

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Susan Mullin
Type of inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	04/03/2010
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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

The home is registered to provide medium- to long-term placements for three young people between the ages of 11 to 17 years who have a range of emotional or behavioural difficulties. The property is a large detached family-sized house, in an established residential area close to a local town centre. The aim of the home is to offer individualised support designed to achieve stability and to prepare young people for a return home or independent living.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was a key unannounced inspection of the service to assess compliance with the national minimum standards for Children's Homes. The home was assessed under the headings of the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes and organisation. Being healthy, enjoying and achieving, economic well-being and positive contribution received a judgement of good whilst staying safe and organisation, received a judgement of satisfactory. Overall the home was judged as satisfactory. Currently, the home does not have a Registered Manager in post.

The inspection focussed on arrangements to meet young people's individual needs, to safeguard their welfare and protect them from harm. The inspection also considered how the home is managed and how staff are supported. The strengths of the home are in the direct care provided to the young people. However, there are shortfalls in the recording, reviewing and auditing systems within the home.

Following the inspection five actions and two recommendations were made. The provider was asked to ensure that all behaviours that have been risk assessed for potential dangers, are clearly documented and reviewed at appropriate intervals, to ensure the written policy for behaviour management is consistently implemented, and to maintain a record, which includes the consequences of any restraint used on a young person. The provider was also asked to ensure the home establishes and maintains a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home and ensure all reports of monthly Regulation 33 visits correlate with the information provided in Regulation 34 audits. The provider was recommended to keep a separate record of all room searches and lastly, to ensure the certificate of insurance specifies the name and address of the home.

Improvements since the last inspection

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

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Staff ensure that young people are aware of the need to stay healthy and there are strategies being used to promote healthy living. Young people enjoy a varied diet and menus are developed with consultation with the young people, who currently are purchasing some of their own food and cooking with support from the staff.

All young people's health needs are supported through a plan that links effectively, to health areas within placement plans. Young people attend a range of health appointments and referrals are made to health professionals where specified needs are highlighted. Records are available of appointments kept or refused. Young people are well supported with regard to their health needs being met.

Appropriate policies and procedures are in place to support the administration of medication. Staff have received training in medication administration and staff are up to date with first aid training. Permissions regarding the administration of medication and the use of first aid are sought on young people's admission to the home, to ensure the ongoing safety of the young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Staff have a general awareness of young people's right to privacy, in that they always knock on the door and get permission from a young person prior to enter their bedrooms. Staff are fully aware of their responsibility to store information securely. Room searches are only undertaken where there are concerns for safety. However, these incidents have not been appropriately recorded in line with the national minimum standards. For example, in some instances, the young person had not been informed properly of the outcome of the search and this may impact on a young person's perspective of what rights they have in the home.

There are a range of individual risk assessments for each young person but these do not give appropriate consideration to the potential risks posed by young people's behaviours and activities. Records do not demonstrate how these risks are to be managed or when they are to be reviewed. Strategies for managing challenging behaviours are known by staff but not clearly outlined in young people's care plans; this may cause confusion and have a detrimental effect on young peoples well-being.

The behaviours of young people currently accommodated have improved and there are appropriate records in relation to sanctions, where young people write their own views. The number of restraints has reduced considerably since the last inspection and records are kept. However, records of restraint in some instances lack sufficient detail about the consequences of the restraint and staff are unsure as to how effective or ineffective each restraint was.

The home retains appropriate records in relation to complaints received and is able to demonstrate that complaints are addressed in a timely manner. All complainants are fully informed about the progress and outcome of any investigation. Staff say that there are no current concerns about bullying. Good information is contained in the young person's guide to advise them about the action they should take if they are being bullied. Staff receive core training to help them recognise the signs and symptoms of bullying and to help them to challenge it proactively.

The home has appropriate safeguarding policies and procedures to guide staff in promoting young people's safety and to clarify their reporting responsibilities. Staff have access to local authority safeguarding procedures and contact details of the local authority designated officer are readily available. There has been no absences without authority since the last inspection.

The staff core training programme covers the requirement to share information appropriately and clarifies their responsibilities in respect of notification of incidents to placing authorities and to Ofsted. The safety of young people, staff and visitors is promoted by regular checks and servicing of electrical and fire prevention equipment and by relevant staff training. All staff and young people are made fully aware of the evacuation procedures in case of fire. Regular fire drills ensure that these procedures are practised, enabling young people and staff to leave the building quickly and safely should an emergency occur.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

All young people are individually able to access independent advocates where required. Young people are also supported through issues relating to drug and alcohol misuse and sexual health matters. Information is available within the home about how young people can access different support services on an independent basis rather than through staff referral.

Young people within the home are all engaged with educational placements. The staff team are fully involved with the looked after children's education service to promote appropriate education for the young people. Personal education plans and educational statements are available for those young people who have attended school on a relatively regular basis.

Young people are involved with a range of differing activities both within the home and externally. There is a system for recording activities that has been completed. Young people are able to positively discuss days out that have been completed with staff. The home's staff support young people to be involved with independent activities where appropriate.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people have their needs assessed and these form the basis of the placement plan. The local authority documentation is also available in the file for more detailed background information. Additional reviews are called if the need arises. Young people are involved in their statutory reviews. Staff at the home play an active part in all reviews and contribute both verbally and in writing, so that full and accurate up-to-date information is considered as part of the decision-making process.

Contact arrangements are clearly recorded on young people's files and they are supported to maintain contact, where appropriate, with significant people in their lives so they retain their sense of identity and belonging. Staff facilitate this by providing transport and support where necessary. Staff also respond appropriately where contact has been inappropriate, in order to keep young people safe and ensure their well-being. Where possible young people move into the home in a planned way. They are able to visit in advance and meet staff and young people, ask questions and start to know how the home runs and what is expected of them.

Young people are encouraged to be involved in decision-making and state their views. They have regular key worker meetings, weekly young people's meetings, reviews and informal discussions. This enables them to make a positive contribution and feel that their views and opinions are valued. However, the home does not currently ascertain the views of parents or social workers in a formal way, other than through the statutory review process, which would provide a further basis for any changes or developments in the care and support provided to young people. This is currently being addressed and will be checked on the next full inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Although the young people accommodated currently do not have formal pathway plans in place, the staff continue to promote young people's independence skills. Young people just beginning their independence programme are encouraged to purchase their own foodstuffs to cook and have an awareness of budgeting their allowances. The staff are proactive in encouraging young people with their independence, for example, by the better promotion of independent travel. All young people receive regular pocket money, toiletry and clothing allowances and are supported and encouraged to spend their allowances wisely.

The home is clean and well maintained, is decorated and furnished to a good standard and provides a homely and welcoming environment for young people and their visitors. Young people's bedrooms are well equipped, providing them with their own personal space. The rear garden is large and provides a play area for young people to enjoy.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The home currently does not have a Registered Manager in post and this is being addressed as the company has now recognised improving effective leadership, is key to helping improve the quality of care at the home. The home is run in a way that satisfactorily promotes and protects young people. The home has in place a Statement of Purpose, which adequately describes the aims and objectives of the services that it intends to provide. Young people receive a guide that is in a suitable format, which they can easily understand. Staff recognise that this is an important document, which helps young people to understand what the home sets out to do and how care is provided.

Regular monitoring of records and staff practice is undertaken and a report is produced in line with Regulation 33. However, findings in Regulation 33 monthly reports do not always correlate with the outcomes evidenced in the Regulation 34 audits, undertaken by senior staff in the home. The internal quality assurance systems are not robust enough to identify practices, which may pose a risk of harm to young people. For example, the issues identified during this inspection have not been identified during this monitoring process as weaknesses and this may impact on the continuity of care provided to the young people.

Not all staff have received appropriate level of formal supervision in line with national minimum requirements. This may impact on staff development within the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people are encouraged to engage in community-based recreational, sporting and cultural activities, so that they can develop skills in social situations and develop respect for others and have fun. The home's staffing arrangements are sufficient to meet the needs of young people placed at the home although recruitment for more care staff is underway. The home is going through a number of changes, with new interim management arrangements being organised by the company which intend to improve practice. Where standards have dropped, for example, in the internal monitoring of the performance of the home, the company has already begun to address the shortfalls, taking decisive action.

Over half of the staff team are trained to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 and staff are continuing to receive basic mandatory and additional professional training. Young people's case records demonstrate progress and reflect their individuality which is good. Staff ensure that records are kept safe and secure.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
22	ensure the written policy for behaviour management is consistently implemented; this is in particular regards to all behaviours having been risk assessed for actual and potential situations that could occur, these must be clearly documented and reviewed at appropriate intervals (Regulation 17 (2) (b))	23/11/2010
22	maintain, in respect of each child who is accommodated in a children's home, a record in permanent form which includes the circumstances and consequences of any restraint used on a young person. (Regulation 28 (1) (a))	23/11/2010
28	ensure all staff working at the home receive regular recorded supervision that meets all the criteria set out in Standard 28.4 (Regulation 27 (4))	23/11/2010
34	ensure that a system for improving the quality of care provided in the children's home in line with Schedule 6 is established and maintained (Regulation 34 (1) (b))	23/11/2010
33	ensure all reports of monthly Regulation 33 visits correlate with the information provided in Regulation 34 audits (Regulation 33).	23/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure a separate record of all room searches is kept for inspection (NMS 9.8)
- ensure certificates of insurance specify the name and address of the particular home (NMS 26.9).