

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	David Morgan
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Date of last inspection	26/05/2010
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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 part of a small private organisation providing crisis placements to girls and boys between nine and 17 years of age; placements do not normally last longer than six months. The home is located in an isolated rural area, a car drive from the nearest town. It is in adapted farm buildings and there are no immediate neighbours.

The service is for young people who have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. They may have poor self-esteem and self-confidence and have experienced abuse or rejection. Programmes are designed to meet individual needs, provide training and educational opportunities, and to avoid exclusion. A substantial amount of time is spent in personalised activities off-site, usually for several days at a time. For example, these programmes may include use of the home's cottage in Wales for short periods.

One young person contributed to this inspection.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This interim unannounced inspection finds that satisfactory standards of care are being maintained. The visit considered the safety of young people as well previous actions and recommendations. Overall, there are substantial improvements underway that reflect recent management and staffing changes; improvements are also being made to the accommodation. Young people benefit from individual attention at all times and an active, healthy life-style.

The previous actions and recommendations have been addressed or partly addressed; two recommendations are carried forward. This time two actions and five recommendations are made that mainly reflect administrative shortfalls during this period of substantial redevelopment.

Improvements since the last inspection

The last key inspection raised two actions and four recommendations. Since then a new visitor has been engaged and is undertaking thorough monthly checks, which now include routine consultations with young people. However, this person is not impartial because she is related to the manager and is therefore directly concerned with the conduct of the home. Currently there are routine consultations with other agencies and attention to a programme of improvements, including improved documentation. Along with conversations with parents these steps are helping to address previous shortfalls and ensure the quality of the service.

Young people's individual risk assessments clearly show any issues, such as those arising from self-harming behaviour. Any steps identified to address the hazards are addressed by staff. Any bedroom searches arising from concerns about young people's possessions now follow the procedure. This helps to preserve the privacy of young people. Similarly, senior staff now have a satisfactory understanding of the complaints process, including the need to keep young people informed during the process. However, the written policy and procedure do not reflect the regulations and standards sufficiently.

The competency and gender balance of individual teams are kept under review and adjusted as necessary. However, although training is underway, the proportion of staff with an appropriate qualification is too low. This has a potentially negative impact on the overall competence of the team.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from a satisfactory level of safety and protection. Reasonable systems are in place to ensure that appropriate staff are employed although evidence is not available on site as required. Staff understand how to manage young people safely and staffing arrangements on each shift are improved with clearer lines of accountability. This helps to ensure that each young person receives the care they need. Shortfalls exist in the attention to fire drill training for all staff, with regard to undertaking relevant types of drills including night times and using the range of exits. Also, the fire risk assessment is out-of-date. These shortfalls mean that safety levels for staff and young people are not as high as they could be.

Similarly, behaviour management systems are adequately applied but the policy is not up-to-date. For example, there is no indication of attention to positive messages to young people such as rewards. Also, not all staff members have signed the policy to indicate their understanding of it. In practice though staff display an adequate application of behaviour management and engage positively with young people. Instances of physical intervention are kept to a minimum, which is important to young people, and there is substantial individual support.

Given the client group with which the home works, issues such as being absent without authority are a high priority. This too is managed appropriately. The amount of off-site time is being reduced and the supervision of young people is improving as a result. Opportunities for bullying are minimal and there are good levels of privacy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is not judged.

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
27	ensure there is full and satisfactory information available in relation to the fitness of workers, with regard to appropriate evidence being on site (Regulation 26(3)(d))	14/03/2011
32	ensure the home is visited by someone who is not directly concerned with the conduct of the home. (Regulation 33(2)(c))	14/03/2011

Recommendations

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

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- ensure the home's complaints policy addresses the matters identified in this standard (NMS 16.3)
 - ensure children and staff know the emergency evacuation procedures for the home in case of fire, with regard to undertaking drills that reflect a variety of fire scenarios (NMS 26.7)
 - ensure there is a clear policy, procedure and guidance for staff based on a code of conduct setting out the control, disciplinary and restraint measures permitted and emphasising the need to reinforce positive messages to children, and that all staff have signed the policy (NMS 22.2 and 22.8)
 - ensure risk assessments are in the format prescribed in this standard and address fire safety and the physical environment (NMS 26.2)
 - ensure that a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete their National Vocational Qualification at level 3. (NMS 29.5)