

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	David Morgan
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Date of last inspection	2 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

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.

It is located in an isolated, rural area, a car drive from the nearest town. It is an adapted building that used to be a farm. 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.

A substantial amount of time is spent in small scale trips off-site, often for several days at a time. Programmes are designed to meet individual needs, provide training and educational opportunities, and to avoid exclusion. These programmes may include use of the home's cottage in Wales for short periods.

On this occasion young people contributed only indirectly to the inspection.

Summary

This interim inspection was undertaken with the education inspector and was therefore announced at short notice. The overall judgement is inadequate and concerns are identified in the two main areas inspected, staying safe and organisation. In particular, there is a shortfall in leadership. Being healthy is not addressed this time. Issues relating to equality and diversity are also inadequate.

Work has occurred since the previous inspection to address the actions and recommendations. Further improvements have been made to procedures relating to complaints and disciplinary processes. Certain records are now in line with regulations and clarification has been made regarding the presence of dogs owned by staff on site. A number of safety issues have been improved but staff qualifications are below the required level.

This actions and recommendations made in this report highlight the concerns about leadership, in particular regarding issues around equality and diversity and the way complaints are addressed. In tandem with this, insufficient informed supervision of staff regarding practical issues means that important policies and procedures are not adhered to. Actions are also made to improve attention to placement plans and the admissions process for young people. Training and risk assessments also require improvements.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Seven actions and four recommendations were raised last time and attention has been paid to all of them. The procedure for dealing with complaints has been improved so that the service provided to young people and others in this regard is improved. However, this report shows that other shortfalls are occurring in this area of care. Care standards in the home have been improved by staff now understanding that any local authority investigations against them will be followed by an internal enquiry to ensure that lessons can be learnt from any breaches of policies. The recording of measures of control is now in line with the guidance. The property

is well presented and there is now no malodour from dogs. The safety of young people has been improved by further attention to risk assessments for the site, physical interventions, and, to staff recruitment procedures. Young people also benefit from greater attention to their privacy with greater clarity of the room search procedure. However, further work is still necessary to ensure that young people benefit from a sufficiently qualified staff 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 inadequate.

Young people fully understand that they can make complaints. The organisation has also clarified with staff recently that allegations against them constitute complaints that will be investigated internally following any investigation by the local authority; this is an important contribution to raising the standard of care. However, although the policy has been reviewed it is not followed adequately. In particular, this means that young people have not been kept aware of the outcomes of complaints. This also indicates a lack of supervision of the person responding to the complaint. In addition, records indicate insufficient training of certain personnel regarding the management of complaints, including the benefits of complaints in raising standards in the home, and the understanding of vital social care principles regarding gender and race. These are serious matters that identify shortfalls directly impacting on the welfare of young people.

In other respects too, the welfare of young people is not fully promoted. In some cases, the histories of young people are inadequately assessed when they are admitted, which means the care they receive is insufficiently tailored to their needs, for example, regarding their religious needs and the gender of their carers. This increases the risk of harm to young people both at the time, for example, through self-harm or absconding, and also subsequently, for example, with young people from minority communities where the involvement of male staff with young women may be interpreted negatively.

Young people at the home are often at high risk of absconding and its rural location places them at greater risk when it occurs. In addition, the frequency of trips increases the risk further to such young people. However, they are not adequately protected in accordance with the home's procedure. In particular, there is a lack of written measures outlining how individual young people who are known to be at risk of absconding will be prevented from leaving the home without permission. This places these young people at greater risk and indicates shortfalls in management.

Satisfactory arrangements are in place to assist young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. There have been recent improvements to the policy so that staff now understand the seriousness of physical interventions of any sort. Young people's safety is also adequately protected by fire safety measures and staff recruitment procedures.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Support to individual young people is inadequate. In particular, there is insufficient identification of the personal needs of individual young people arising from their gender, race and religion.

This is a substantial shortfall. There is also insufficient understanding about how this impacts on protecting young people from harm. The organisation is well-established and staff receive appropriate training and this shortfall reflects poorly on the overall competence of the managers and the staff team. In addition, young people are not protected by an appropriate assessment of their individual risks, such as absconding, which is a key part of any placement planning.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is inadequate.

Young people have written placement plans but they do not always reflect their individual needs. Although progress has been made in daily record sheets to ensure that staff address the individual needs of young people it does not occur systematically. Young people's needs are not always identified and, in some cases, parallel documents are drafted that are not integrated into the placement planning process. This means that the needs of young people are not addressed adequately. There is insufficient understanding about the purpose and importance of documents, such as placement plans and risk assessments, and insufficiently clear direction by the manager.

Young people do not benefit from sufficiently sensitive admissions. The service routinely caters for young people who are placed in emergencies but it is not clear how the decisions regarding admissions occur or that qualified senior care workers are involved. There is insufficient evidence of matching new admissions with existing residents or consideration in advance of whether the service can meet young people's needs. It is of particular concern that the manager is not in full control of this process.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The home is well presented, clean and tidy. Since last time a review has occurred of the source of malodour in the home that was found to be caused by the dogs owned by staff. Procedures have been reviewed and no dogs are now allowed on site or trips. This helps to ensure that hygiene and health and safety issues are maintained but also that the full attention of staff is on young people.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The promotion of equality and diversity is inadequate. This report identifies several areas of care in which there is insufficient attention to individual needs.

Young people are looked after by staff who are not sufficiently supported. There is inadequate attention to a variety of supervisory matters, including: admissions; the organisation of trips to ensure they meet the needs of young people; ensuring staff follow policies and procedures, such as those for complaints, and, ensuring staff learn from and apply training, regarding, for example, equality and diversity, complaints, and, risk assessments. Young people do not benefit from staff who are sufficiently up-to-date with developments in the home because there is insufficient attendance at staff meetings. This is particularly important because staff often work off-site, away from any direct supervision, and monitoring of trips is minimal. This contributes to a lack of coordination that leads to potential and actual shortfalls in welfare provision.

Although recruitment has been undertaken to ensure that there is a satisfactory number of staff and a balance of genders on each team, insufficient staff have completed appropriate qualifications. This report also highlights shortfalls that reflect poorly on the competence of the whole team as well as the management. Such shortfalls have occurred despite staff benefiting from a thorough training programme. Certain gaps are evident in the training of a small number of personnel, including training regarding complaints and equality and diversity for the responsible individual.

Concerns about the competence of the team extend to the capacity of the manager to adequately coordinate the service, particularly during a period of substantial developments. This report highlights some areas that have caused concern previously, such as risk assessments, complaints and placement planning. Leadership is not satisfactory and this has direct consequences for young people, for example, when admissions are incorrectly administered and when individual needs are not identified.

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
16	ensure the complaints procedure is made known to persons working in the home, and that it is followed (Regulation 24 (2)(e)(4))	14 December 2009
17	ensure the written policy for the protection of children is followed, with regard to identifying and meeting their individual needs (Regulation 16(1))	14 December 2009
19	ensure the procedure to be followed when any child is absent without permission is implemented (Regulation 16(4)(b))	14 December 2009
7	ensure there are suitable arrangements with regard to the sex, religious persuasion, racial origin, and cultural background of children placed in the home (Regulation 11(2)(b))	14 December 2009
2	ensure each child has a placement plan before admission, or as soon as practicable afterwards, setting out how he will be cared for, with regard to his known needs (Regulation 12(1)(a))	14 December 2009
5	ensure the home is conducted so as to promote and make proper provision for the welfare of children accommodated there, with regard to following the admission procedure and recording decisions (Regulation 11(1)(a))	14 December 2009
28	ensure all persons employed receive appropriate supervision, with regard to the practice issues raised in this report, including their attendance at staff meetings (Regulation 27(4)(a))	14 December 2009

31	ensure all people employed receive appropriate training, with regard to complaints and Equality and Diversity (Regulation 27(4)(a))	14 December 2009
34	ensure that the manager has the qualifications, skills and experience necessary for managing the home. (Regulation 8(2)(b)(1))	14 December 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure that significant risks to children are defined in their placement plans and an appropriate risk assessment is made and recorded (NMS 7.9)
- ensure that a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff complete their National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 (NMS 29.5)
- ensure the overall competence of staff, both as a group and on individual shifts, is satisfactory in relation to the fulfilment of the home's statement of purpose. (NMS 29.1)