

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Karen Forster
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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 service forms part of the residential childcare services provided by an independent company. The service provides integrated packages of care, therapy and education to a maximum of six children with reactive attachment difficulties, aged five to seventeen years.

An integral school is provided on the same site, and the outdoor play area and car park are shared. Six young people were resident at the time of the visit, who all contributed towards the inspection.

Summary

This visit is an unannounced full inspection, covering all of the every child matters outcome areas, plus an additional outcome area of organisation. This is an outstanding service, where outcomes for young people are excellent. Individualised care and support is consistently provided, which matches the strengths and needs of the young people exceptionally well. Recommended areas for development include the level of detail within the home's records of personal allowances and risk assessments, and the quality of the living environment.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection in July 2009 raised one recommendation which has been addressed by the provider. The home now includes proof of each staff member's identity within their personnel records maintained within the service.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The young people enjoy a well balanced and highly varied menu. Individual food preferences are well recorded and closely followed within the group. This means that tasty food is suitably prepared and well presented in line with the choices of young people, alongside the provision of new tastes for the group. Young people feel able to access drinks and snacks according to their wishes.

Young people's current health care needs and a detailed medical history, along with strategies to address the same, are outlined in very clear health care plans for young people. Young people with a variety of presenting health care needs are safely and meticulously cared for by staff, with a high regard for attention to clinical detail. This is achieved through key staff supporting young people in their attendance at primary and secondary health care appointments, which means that young people consult specialist healthcare professionals for help and guidance.

The individual with parental responsibility has provided signed consent for house staff to administer first aid treatment and prescribed medication. The use of certain items of non prescribed medication is also authorised by the individual with parental responsibility and the General Practitioner, which means all stored medication can be safely administered to young people with no adverse reactions.

Medication storage and administration within the home meets the standards. The service provides a secure cabinet for items of medication dispensed by the community pharmacy. Medication administration records are very clearly maintained and staff operate a sound medication stock control and disposal system. This means that young people are offered medication in line with their medical prescription, and staff on subsequent shifts know when medication has been offered and administered.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

The home's personal care procedures promote the privacy and safety of young people. Staff are very careful to respect young people's privacy when supporting individuals to complete personal care programmes, which are discreetly completed within the group. Personal data relating to young people is stored securely in line with internal policy and the standards.

The home maintains an excellent procedure for the collection of compliments and complaints from service users, their families and other stakeholders. The active dialogue between staff, parents and social workers is evidenced by the contact log records. This means that any concerns are openly discussed and followed up by staff appropriately. Young people's concerns and complaints are captured through the use of child friendly complaint forms. The details included within the home's complaints log demonstrate that comments are addressed and followed up well by senior staff.

Children's safeguarding procedures are extremely good, with young people's welfare given the highest priority. Staff confirm that they are aware of their responsibilities within the home's child protection procedures and have received comprehensive safeguarding training. The local authority's safeguarding manual is available within the home to complement the home's clearly written safeguarding policies.

There is an anti-bullying policy maintained within the service, where the stated aim is to manage any episodes of bullying and to prevent further incidents occurring. Young people feel when bullying is an issue within the home that staff know what action to take, and treat their concerns seriously. Daily records and manager's quality checks within the home support this assertion.

The home's protocol regarding young people going missing from care is highly relevant to the dependency levels of the service users. Staff members are clear regarding permissible measures to use in an attempt to stop young people leaving the home without authority. The home's policy is clear, meets the standards and staff are familiar with the content. The newly developed protocol with the local police force, means that local community services would help in the search for missing young people. This means that any episodes of missing young people would be followed up with suitable responses, reflective of the gravity of the situation.

Staff and young people using the service work well together to help individuals to manage their behaviour. Positive consequences are used consistently well within the group, to capture and celebrate positive behaviour. Young people receive individual and well planned staff responses to any presenting unacceptable behaviour, as part of their comprehensive behaviour management strategy.

The home's policy regarding physical intervention meets the standards, and all established staff have received instruction in the safe control of challenging behaviours. The preferred model

of physical intervention includes de-escalation and only uses restraint as a last resort, which meets the standards and helps to keep young people safe. The written accounts of restraints meet the recording requirements of the standards and help senior staff to monitor the use of physical intervention within the home.

The home ensures that the environment young people live in is safe and free of hazards, this helps young people to feel physically safe in the home. This sound level of health and safety within the home is achieved through the regular servicing of utility installations within the premises and close attention to fire safety risk assessment and risk management. The temperature of the hot water supply to the bathroom areas is checked by staff, for compliance with the standards and health and safety limits. These temperature checks indicate that the temperature of the hot water supply to one bathroom, exceeds the maximum level specified in the standards for younger children. While the home maintains good risk assessment and management strategies within this area to keep young people safe, they are not refined enough to provide young people with independent use of the bathroom for bathing. This means that staff currently help to manage the risk of the hot water temperature, by filling the bath with hot water.

The home completes all of the clearance checks for new staff, as required by schedule two of the regulations. The well maintained personnel records carry the details of these checks, and demonstrate the robust recruitment programme in use in the home. This means that suitably cleared staff care for young people within the home.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive a highly personalised care service which is very suitable to their needs and promotes their abilities. Staff work hard to address the care objectives outlined within the placement plan by maintaining a continuity of care and consistent relationships with the young people and their placing authorities. This means that all changes in presented needs are consistently shared, both within the staff team and between the service and family and involved professionals. The package of care includes a consistent, tailor made therapy service. This element of the service is very well integrated into the programme of care for each young person, and enhances the residential experience. These care components enable an outstanding quality of care to be provided to individuals. The level of both verbal and written communication between staff in the home is sound, and means that staff are consistent in their approach towards individual young people. Therefore, young people enjoy consistent, safe care programmes that optimise their abilities and help to further develop their social and self help skills.

Young people and staff within the home work really well with professionals from within the integral school and community schools. This means that individuals access education and services suitable to their needs. There is good evidence of a seamless service approach, where staff from the home, the therapy service and from the respective school, work well together to support young people's development and achievements. This joined up culture maintains outcomes for young people as the central focus, where different disciplines are operational. Young people benefit greatly from these integrated care programmes and the professional input of relevant specialists.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

The strengths and needs of all the young people within the service are very well assessed and their medium and short term care objectives are included within very detailed placement plans. The care planning is extremely well refined to include a monthly report of young people's achievements towards their care targets. This means that success is well celebrated and areas for further development easily identified and addressed. Detailed copies of the placing social worker's looked after child paperwork are maintained for all service users. The internal placement plans are comprehensive and highly consistent with the contents of the local authority's documentation. This means that service users, commissioners and providers are clear regarding the aims of the placement and how the residential care element contributes towards the overall package of therapeutic care.

The care of individuals is independently reviewed, with a high level of involvement from young people and the presence of all relevant parties. This means that an external professional reviews the quality of the service and gathers feedback from service users themselves and relevant stakeholders regarding the outcomes for young people. There is evidence within the home's records of key worker sessions, of the highly sensitive strategies utilised by the service to help young people reflect on their achievements and areas for development.

Young people enjoy very close contact with their families and significant people, whilst they live in the home. This is evident by the home's log of contact between both young people and key staff with: family members; social workers; independent visitors and previous carers. This means that young people keep in touch with family members and significant individuals, which they value.

The young people's records include very detailed pre-admission information, including individual risk assessments and previous histories. Relevant looked after child documentation is maintained within the home for reference and internal risk management strategies are agreed pre-admission, providing the home's staff with a wealth of highly relevant information to inform their safe care of individual young people.

There are very well developed strategies within the home for the involvement of young people in their placement plans and daily choices. The young people can recall visits and meetings with their social workers and independent reviewing officers, where they can make their thoughts and wishes known. The service maintains a robust customer feedback system, where comprehensive feedback is collected and collated from parents, social workers and young people themselves. This intelligence is then used well by the senior staff, to improve practice and develop outcomes for young people. There is consistent written and observational evidence of the young people's thoughts and feelings being shared and valued by the rest of the group. Young people really enjoy living within the home, and a very warm, caring atmosphere is observed between the young people and support staff within the service.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The extremely well developed care planning system within the home enables staff to assess the young people's progress with life skills and to plan for development of such skills. Young people feel staff support them in their acquisition of life skills. There is evidence of well written

support plans for areas of self care, including diet and personal presentation for example. Young people enjoy the use of their weekly pocket money, and learn how to manage their money. However, the receipt of some personal allowances is not consistently reflected in the home's records. This means that there are small gaps in isolated cases, in the record keeping within this area.

Single bedrooms are provided for young people, which are reasonably well decorated and highly personalised. The young people and staff have the use of communal areas that are highly comfortable, very domestic in style and suitably maintained. Although any damage or repairs are completed promptly to maintain the high quality of the living environment, there is still some evidence of plaster work damage to walls and ceilings. The communal areas afford a very good level of choice of recreational areas, including four lounges, a dining area and a garden.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home provides a very clearly written statement of purpose which meets and exceeds the requirements of schedule one to the regulations. The young people's guide is extremely well presented in a child friendly manner, with excellent use of photographs and pictures. This means that clear and accessible information relating to the service is available for stakeholders and interested parties.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. Young people benefit from the staff group's extremely well developed understanding and sensitive approach to their individual needs. Diversity and equality are promoted very effectively in all aspects of the service. This includes the quality and detail of young people's placement plans, which enable carers to personalise the living environment for young people. The care practice within the service focuses on young people as individuals, where identity and heritage are well promoted and lifestyle choices supported. All staff have a very good knowledge of the impact of the attachment difficulties on individual young people, and their needs as young people are always considered and addressed by a consistent and caring staff team.

The establishment's very generous staffing levels are suitable for the numbers of young people and their care needs. Emergency back up is provided for home staff via the service's leadership team. This means that staff receive appropriate advice and support during emergency situations through both the day and night. The home provides a clear procedural guide for staff which confirms the provider's policies regarding such issues as safeguarding, personal care, medication and physical intervention. This means that staff can regularly refresh their understanding of these procedures, and their practice is in line with the company's guidelines. Staff know what demands there are on carers within the service, from an early stage in their shift programme. This is due to the robust recruitment process, which includes visits and observations within the home.

Care staff within the home are training in or qualified to the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at level three. This means that young people are cared for by competent staff whose abilities have been verified by an independent body. Young people benefit from the close involvement of the qualified, well experienced registered manager, who plays an extremely active part in the implementation of care programmes within the home. This means that the care of young people is positively influenced by the contributions of well experienced and qualified junior and senior staff.

The home's comprehensive induction programme reflects the basic and specialist functions of the care staff role in the home. The specialist areas relevant to the service include such elements as attachment and the therapeutic journey. The positive level of training provided means that young people benefit from knowledgeable staff who are confident and consistent in the application of specialist service procedures. The induction programme includes a well implemented assessment of competence against a national standard for residential staff, provided by the children's workforce development council.

The quality of care is robustly monitored by senior staff members and provides comprehensive quality assurance reports to improve the outcomes for young people even further. The quality monitoring system is exemplary as it incorporates a substantial element of external feedback from placing authorities and families, in addition to the feedback from resident young people. The leadership team embraces all feedback provided by families, commissioners and regulators in a positive and balanced manner. This means that the leadership within the service is highly effective, as it moves the service forward and strives to maintain the best possible outcomes for young people.

The service maintains two well indexed files that contain all of the young people's records as required by schedule three of the Children's Home's Regulations 2001. This means that both current and historical personal record information is available and readily accessible to young people and all authorised individuals within the home.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
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Recommendations

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

- ensure that all young people's personal allowances are clearly recorded within their care records (NMS 11)
- ensure that the home is suitably decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, especially in relation to areas of damaged plaster work on the walls and ceilings (NMS 24)
- ensure that the risk of the hot water temperature continues to be clearly assessed and managed, and strategies allow for young people to prepare their own bath water where suitable. (NMS 25)