

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	19 January 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 provides medium to long-term care for young people who would be of primary school age on admission. The organisation specialise in working with children and young people who are deemed to suffer from an attachment disorder or attachment difficulty. All admissions are planned.

The home is domestic in appearance. In most areas, it provides a child-friendly environment with space for young people to follow their individual interests.

Young people are integrated into schools located within the area and participate in a variety of community-based leisure activities and pursuits.

As well as providing residential provision, the organisation can provide individual therapeutic programmes. All such activity takes place away from the home environment. It remains the responsibility of placing authorities who purchase therapeutic packages for a young people, to ensure it is appropriate to meet their individual needs.

Summary

At this full inspection all the key standards were inspected. Any outstanding actions and recommendations from the previous inspection were also followed up. The initial visit took place unannounced on the 20 July 2009 with a further visit-taking place on the 22 July 2009 to conclude the inspection.

The home currently accommodates a group of young people who are all aged under 10 years old. The home is purposely structured with clear boundaries in place. The individual needs of young people are recognised, with specific plans in place designed to meet those needs.

A stable, experienced staff group provide continuity and a safe environment for the young people in their care. Despite young people being at times impulsive, demanding, volatile and challenging, good relationships exist between them and staff. Both staff and young people contribute positively to create a lively, energetic atmosphere in a home providing a good standard of care.

The home is well organised and managed. This is a positive reflection on the manager who was only registered in May 2009. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected.

No major issues or concerns were raised by either staff or young people. As a result of this inspection, the report contains no actions but two good practice recommendations have been made. The overall quality rating of the home has moved from satisfactory to good.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection, two actions and one recommendation were made. Both actions have been positively addressed with repairs to the structure of the home being completed

relatively quickly when any damage occurs. Significant improvement has been achieved regarding the organisation and implementation of the formal programme of staff supervision.

The recommendation made was linked to a need for clearer identification of the religious and cultural needs in young people's placement plans and how they can be met. Some progress has been noted. However, this has led to a wider issue that again links to how equality and diversity is presented in placement plans. Therefore, the recommendation has been repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people have no concerns regarding the choice, quality or quantity of food served. They assist with the planning of menus, shopping and where appropriate, the preparation of food. Menus are varied, nutritional and provide choice. There is a good mix of traditional and cultural dishes and young people have access to fresh fruit daily. Meals are taken in the dining area and organised as social occasions.

The health needs of young people are being promoted positively. They have regular visits to a range of general health practitioners as well as more specialised treatment if necessary. Each one has a specific health plan and all visits to any health professional are recorded appropriately. The home maintains a range of age appropriate information linked to health issues. Staff receive training through induction and the core staff training programme on matters such first aid, basic food hygiene and medication awareness.

Medication is stored securely and records of all prescribed and non prescribed medication administered are up to date and properly kept.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Privacy is not an issue of concern to young people. Each have their own bedroom to which they have free access and the home is spacious enough for young people to find some privacy if they wish. Any sensitive and personal information is held securely in the office.

Young people are given information about the complaints system verbally by staff and in writing through the young persons guide. Appropriate records of all complaints and their outcomes are kept. The complaints system has been successfully tested by young people recently, demonstrating that they understand how to access the system.

The safety and rights of staff and young people are protected. The home has its own safeguarding procedures, which are underpinned by the local authority's procedures. Any concerns are referred immediately to the appropriate external agencies. Staff are aware of their own responsibilities and how they should react if potential safeguarding issues arises. All staff have received safeguarding training, which is updated regularly as part of the ongoing core staff-training programme.

Whilst at times, young people bully each other, they confirm that staff are quick to intervene and any incidents are treated seriously. Good staffing levels and the deployment of staff go some way to minimising the number of incidents taking place. Information about young people's rights and issues around bullying appears in the young person's guide, with further information

displayed around the home. Bullying, either as a perpetrator or victim, along with their own vulnerability are addressed in young people's planning documentation and individual risk assessments.

Appropriate practical systems, underpinned by policy and procedures, are in place to deal with unauthorised absence. However, there has been no requirement to implement these systems since the previous inspection.

Sanctions are known in the home as consequences, with positives recorded alongside negatives. Negative sanctions are relatively few and those implemented have been fair and meet the requirements of regulation and standards. Staff are experienced and trained to manage difficult behaviour. They do so positively, without always having to resort to punitive actions. Physical interventions when used, are undertaken safely by staff trained in positive handling techniques. Detailed records of all incidents are maintained. Young people have no concerns or issues saying they feel they live in a safe environment.

General health and safety issues are addressed with a range of risk assessments covering general hazards around the home. In addition, individual risk assessments are completed for each young person. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment.

The systems for recruiting and clearing staff meet with regulatory requirement, with appropriate evidence being retained on site.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with a good level of support, which is evidenced in a variety of planning documentation and records of key worker sessions. In addition, practical examples of good, individual support were observed throughout the inspection. Young people's individual needs are recognised with any specific need being addressed positively.

Suitable educational arrangements are in place, with all young people attending community-based schools regularly. Each has a specific educational plan and good levels of communication exist between the home and schools. Facilities and support for young people to complete homework are good and the home has a number of educational provisions such as art and craft materials.

Young people speak positively about the range of activities they are involved with. Each has a weekly activity plan, which includes both group and individual activities, many of them being community based.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The documentation making up the placement plan is comprehensive, wide ranging and updated regularly. Individual needs are identified with plans and specific strategies in place to meet them. Planning documentation is underpinned by individual risk assessments that are also reviewed and updated regularly. When read collectively, they provide a detailed insight into the needs of young people and the arrangements in place to address them positively. Young

people sign all relevant sections of their own plans and are able to discuss them in an age appropriate way.

The individual, cultural, religious and racial needs of young people are identified throughout the range of documentation that makes up the placement plan. However, the specific section entitled religious, cultural and racial, contains only minimal information.

Statutory reviews are taking place within the required timescale. Young people confirm they are encouraged to attend their own reviews and are well supported prior to, during and after reviews have taken place. The records of the last review form part of a young person's planning documentation.

Young people's case files contain a dedicated section covering contact, which includes records of all contact maintained. Contact arrangements are clearly laid out in planning documentation. Young people and staff understand the arrangements that are in place, some of which are restrictive due to safety issues. The home arranges for an independent advocate to visit on a monthly basis.

The current group of young people all had planned admissions. They were able to meet with staff and visit the home, prior to admission.

Young people are supported positively and encouraged to make decisions about their own lives and with regard to certain aspects of the home's operation. For example, in choosing the colour scheme for their bedroom and choices made about food and activities. Consultation was observed taking place informally throughout the inspection and young people have regular meetings with staff which are recorded. Despite bouts of challenging and unsettled behaviour at times, positive relationships were observed between young people and staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The young people accommodated are of an age where preparation for leaving care is not applicable.

Previous inspections have highlighted concerns about the home's general state of repair, following damage caused by young people. Some progress has been made in ensuring any necessary repairs are completed within a quicker timescale. For example, on arrival, some minor damage, caused the previous day was noted. Some of that damage had been rectified by the time the concluding visit took place two days later.

The home is domestic in appearance, spacious and suitably furnished. Bedrooms are personalised to reflect the interests of the occupier. There is space for young people to play and receive visitors. Young people were observed as comfortable and at ease within their surroundings. However, the bathrooms used by them whilst functional are bland, dull and do not have a warm, welcoming appearance.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of purpose, revised and updated in June 2009 provides an accurate insight into the organisation and function of the home. Young people are given a bright and colourful guide

to the home when admitted. It contains a variety of information in an age appropriate format. Both meet with regulatory requirement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Since the previous inspection, an equality and diversity practice book has been created. As well as containing information about a variety of different religions and cultures, it records how staff and young people have celebrated events such as cultural theme nights and religious festivals. An example of the positive promotion of diversity is reflected in the menu, where foods from a variety of different cultures appear regularly.

Significant improvement has been achieved in the organisation and implementation of the formal staff supervision programme. Supervision for all staff is taking place consistently, within the recommended time scale.

The numbers, experience and adequacy of staff is good, with little changes to the staff group within the last year. All but two staff have completed or are undertaking an appropriate NVQ. Allied to this, staff regularly participate in an active, ongoing core staff-training programme, which covers a range of relevant areas.

Duty rotas are planned in advance and there are appropriate arrangements in place to cover any staff absences. Staff have a team centred approach, working together collectively to cover holidays and illness. This provides a continuity of practice and sense of reassurance to young people.

The general organisation and management of the home has improved since the previous inspection, with good managerial systems having been implemented. Both the external and internal monitoring of the home is taking place consistently, within the required timescale. Monitoring reports are comprehensive and contain a quality assurance element, which results in a monthly action plan designed to improve standards.

Young people's case files are neat, well ordered and kept up to date.

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
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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 the religious and cultural needs of young people and how these are to be met, are identified and included in more detail within young people's plans (NMS 2.1)
- create a more welcoming, child friendly environment in the bathing areas used by young people (NMS 24.2).