

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Bridgette Lowe
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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 home is one of two homes run by the organisation. The home offers residential placements for up to six children, male or female, who are between the ages of eight and 16 years on admission. The home specialises in providing therapeutic care for children who have suffered trauma in their lives, such as physical, sexual or emotional abuse, or neglect, and display a variety of behavioural problems.

The home is a large two storey detached building in a residential area which is close to local shops and other amenities. Five young people were accommodated at the time of the inspection.

Summary

This was an unannounced key inspection. The purpose of this inspection was to ensure that the home is continuing to meet the national minimum standards and regulations for children's homes and protect and promote the welfare of the young people accommodated.

The home continues to offer a generally good standard of care for young people, however a number of recommendations and regulatory requirements have been made as a result of this inspection. Young people's emotional and health needs are well met, with healthy eating being promoted within the home. Medication records are generally well maintained although individual records do not include full and relevant information as detailed in this report. Staff training in areas such as being healthy and fire safety is lacking. Staff supervision has lapsed recently and needs to be reinstated to ensure young people's welfare is fully promoted. Incidents of behaviour management must be closely monitored to ensure the home's policy and procedural guidance is followed.

Young people are supported to enjoy their time and achieve greater independence whilst living at the home. Young people are encouraged to have a voice and advocate for themselves through staff support and house meetings.

The organisation is going through a period of change. The registered manager has left and an acting manager is overseeing the day to day management of the home. Effective monitoring is not taking place; this potentially compromises the welfare of young people placed at the home.

The overall quality rating is inadequate.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection the registered person was issued with one regulatory action and two recommendations.

The registered person was required to ensure that notifications of events concerning young people are sent in a timely fashion to placing authorities and relevant agencies. This action now takes place and notifications are made within 24 hours.

A recommendation was made to ensure that individual arrangements to prevent young people being absent without authority are written up and agreed with placing authorities. Individual agreements are now in place and agreed by placing authorities.

A recommendation was made asking staff to read and sign to confirm their understanding of the home's policy on physical restraint and retain evidence of this on personnel files. This recommendation has not been carried out, and will be restated in this report. This recommendation needs to be acted upon to ensure all staff are following the home's policy on behaviour management and physical intervention to ensure further incidents of inappropriate restraint taking place and young people are suitably safeguarded.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's health and emotional needs continue to be well met. All young people have access to a range of health professionals to meet individual needs. Staff demonstrate a comprehensive awareness of young people's health and emotional wellbeing with therapy input being key to supporting and developing young people living at the home.

Staff promote healthy eating with young people and ensure individual's eating habits are closely monitored. Young people are able to make choices about meals and are positively encouraged to try new menus with the introduction of cultural themed menus. Young people are encouraged and supported by staff to purchase, prepare and cook meals to promote their independent living skills. Staff confirm that food hygiene and handling training needs to be updated.

Medication administration records for each young person are generally well maintained. However, individual records do not contain the time medication is administered and full medication information was not always evident on inspection of records. All staff have recently completed their four day first aid qualification. Clear and comprehensive health information is maintained for all young people, with key workers being proactive in ensuring regular health appointments are made and attended by young people. The majority of staff have not undertaken safe administration and handling of medication training.

Medication is safely stored to ensure young people's health is protected. There are no controlled drugs within the home. Generally, records are made of any medical intervention needed or accident or injury sustained by young people. However, a young person received an injury following a physical intervention. No record or explanation of how the injury was sustained could be evidenced on inspection. Due to recent management issues within the home it was evident that effective monitoring of all areas has not been happening and senior staff had not known the appropriate record had not been made.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is inadequate.

Young people are supported by staff who have a good understanding of key child protection matters and are supported by regular training. Staff demonstrate a good understanding of the individual needs of the young people and how to appropriately safeguard them.

Young people's privacy is well respected by the staff and young people have their own bedrooms.

The complaints system is clear and understood by staff, and young people are prompted to use it. Records are kept of any concerns raised, although on inspection of the records it was unclear of the date a young person made an official complaint. There was no record of action

taken or the outcome of the complaint. The deputy manager reported this had yet to be dealt with.

Any issues of bullying are managed effectively and swiftly. Staff are vigilant of young people and the group dynamics within the home, working well to support young people who report feeling bullied.

Young people's behaviour is not always managed well. 'Team Teach' training is undertaken by all staff. It was evident on inspection of records that levels of physical intervention have significantly increased since the last inspection. One entry stated that a young person was physically removed by two people from a room as they were non compliant to staff requests to leave the room. There was no evidence the young person was causing harm to themselves or others. This practice does not promote the welfare of young people. One young person commented that they felt 'staff are too quick to restrain you and that makes me angry'. It was clear that records were not being closely monitored and some entries of physical intervention did not always state who was involved in the intervention, the time of intervention, and were not always signed by the appropriate member of staff, this does not meet the regulation. An injury as a result of a physical intervention has not been clearly investigated or recorded by staff within the home. A child protection investigation was undertaken and no further action was deemed necessary by the local authority. A young person causing behaviour concerns does not currently have a behaviour management plan in place to identify and work to decrease the levels of challenging incidents being exhibited. A previous recommendation to ensure that all staff read and sign to confirm their understanding of the home's policy on physical restraint and evidence of this is retained on their personnel file has not been carried out.

There are clear systems for reporting and recording any event where a young person has been absent without consent. These incidents have significantly decreased since the previous inspection. Risk assessments and records clearly detail actions to safeguard young people and those young people at risk from being absent from the home without authority. Staff implement the organisation's policies and procedures promptly should a young person leave the home without authorisation.

The home has clear procedures for action when significant events take place. The home notifies all those persons and appropriate authorities in a timely manner of the significant events that have occurred.

Young people are encouraged to access the local community independently through a balanced risk assessment process. Young people are actively encouraged to develop positive independent lives dependant on their age and ability, through a range of staff support means.

The health and safety policies and procedures are generally sound with no apparent hazards on inspection. Regular checks are undertaken on fire safety equipment and systems and young people confirmed knowing the fire evacuation procedure. However, a new bank member of staff reported not being given a health and safety briefing and was unaware of the fire evacuation procedure. Young people and staff have not undertaken four evacuation drills in the past 12 months; this does not meet the National Minimum Standard. The latest evacuation was early evening, and no record of night time evacuations could be evidenced. Fire records indicated that the majority of staff have not undertaken fire safety training since 2004, although

two staff received fire extinguisher training in 2008. No record that any electrical testing has been undertaken in the previous twelve months could be evidenced on inspection.

Staff recruitment and vetting procedures are generally very robust. These include Criminal Records Bureau checks, checks against the Protection of Children Act list and three references being sought prior to staff commencing employment. One file sampled did not contain evidence of qualifications being checked. The home does use agency staff and the organisation's own bank of staff to support at times of annual leave and sickness. These staff are appropriately vetted to ensure their suitability to work with young people.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The individual needs of each young person are highlighted through detailed care planning and review. Individual support from a range of professionals is key to the success of young people developing and achieving whilst living at the home. All staff are available to respond to the individual needs of each young person as and when required. However, staff reported pressures following increased behaviours from individuals, an emergency placement impacting on the current group of young people placed, staff reorganisation and the registered manager leaving.

Young people are encouraged and supported to attain their educational goals. Suitable and up to date plans ensure that the particular educational needs of each young person are assessed and incorporated into realistic education programmes. Young people are assisted to maintain their educational placements with all young people attending school. Staff work closely with young people's education to ensure any issues are highlighted and addressed promptly to maintain consistent school attendance. The organisation is currently looking to develop and provide education facilities for young people who have difficulty in mainstream education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are supported by staff who are committed to promoting young people having a voice and to make a positive contribution to their lives and placement whilst living at the home. Good care plans comprehensively detail the care needed and how this is to be provided to young people. The recruitment of an admin member of staff is supporting more efficient record keeping; however, this appointment is fairly recent and all systems were being reviewed and reorganised at the time of inspection. Staff are successful in engaging with young people, enabling young people to develop and achieve positive progress since living at the home. Young people were observed to communicate and responded well to staff support.

Regular reviews of care planning ensure that young people have their progress assessed routinely. When necessary, care plans are amended to meet changing needs or circumstances. Monthly summaries have been reinstated and are shared with local authorities, with improved working relationships being made with placing authority social workers.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with family members where appropriate. Young people have access to a private phone. Staff facilitate visits for young people in order for them to maintain strong links with family members.

Initial referral information to the home is good, ensuring the young person's needs are known and understood prior to placement. This ensures the suitability of the placement and highlights how staff can provide the best possible care.

The atmosphere in the home is open and friendly and young people are clearly able to express their opinions easily. Regular young people's meetings allow a formal approach to be considered in respect of their views, concerns and requests, with the re introduction of separate girls' and boys' groups to discuss a range of issues concerning young people. Staff promote young people's independence and provide opportunities for them to advocate for themselves.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people have the opportunity to access the local community through a balanced risk assessed process. Young people work towards greater independence whilst living at the home and are encouraged to have 'independence time' which is closely monitored. Staff support young people to budget, prepare and cook their own meals with the support levels they require. Young people are encouraged through their placement to be as independent as possible and staff work closely to support them with a range of independent living skills in order to prepare them for leaving care.

Young people enjoy a large spacious home with good facilities and leisure areas provided. Young people are positively encouraged to personalise their rooms. Bathrooms and toilets are adjacent to both living and sleeping accommodation and adequate for purpose. The home provides comfortable and homely facilities for young people accommodated. The home has a large garden and is close to local amenities with access to public transport, providing further opportunities for independence for young people.

Organisation

The organisation is inadequate.

The home's staff structure is currently going through a period of reorganisation. The registered manager has recently left and the deputy of the home is acting as manager. The acting manager reported being on shift and supporting young people but being unable to consistently undertake monitoring checks or ensure records are being maintained as required. A new manager to oversee both the organisation's children's homes will be in post full time as from September 2009. It was evident on inspection that effective monitoring to ensure the welfare of young people is being promoted and protected is not taking place. A current updated Statement of Purpose could not be produced on inspection.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Staff work to support young people's individual cultural and diverse needs well.

Staff duty rotas indicated that there are adequate levels of staff on duty at all times. A number of new staff have been appointed to the home and are on their induction period. Staff training has taken place with child protection refresher and four day first aid; however, areas of health and safety as mentioned within Being Healthy and Staying Safe within this report remain to be met. The acting manager reported that staff supervision had lapsed due to pressures of staffing and time to undertake these. One member of staff is currently undertaking their social work qualification and the acting manager has a National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) at

level 4. A large majority of the staff team are trained to NVQ level 3. Staff demonstrated a good understanding of the individual needs of the young people.

The welfare of young people is being compromised by ineffective monitoring. On inspection of files and discussion with the acting manager it was clear that records are not being maintained as required, including unclear and inaccurate incident reports and an incomplete physical interventions log. Staff practice is not being monitored effectively as regular supervision is not taking place. Two Regulation 33 reports were missing from the file viewed and it was unclear whether visits had taken place in July and May 2009.

Young people benefit from very well kept case files. They are stored securely and confidentially. They contain clearly written records and provide comprehensive accounts of the young person's history and progress.

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
27	ensure copies of qualifications are held on all personnel files. Regulation 26 schedule 2	25 September 2009
28	ensure all staff receive appropriate supervision at regular intervals. Regulation 27	2 October 2009
34	ensure the new manager submits an application to register with Ofsted. Regulation 8	30 October 2009
22	maintain an accurate and up to date record of measures of control used, as set out in Regulation 17.	28 August 2009
33	ensure effective monitoring is undertaken in all areas set out in schedule 6.	2 October 2009
32	undertake and produce a report which is readily available within the home of monthly monitoring visits as set out in Regulation 33.	31 August 2009
16	maintain an accurate record of all complaints made by young people in the home and actions taken as a result. Regulation 24	11 September 2009
22	ensure incidents of restraint are closely monitored and efforts made to decrease the number of physical interventions used, and to ensure they are not used as a means of compliance. Regulation 17	28 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- review medication records to include full dose and medication details and the time medication is administered (NMS 13.2)
- train staff in safe administration and handling of medication (NMS 13)
- ensure staff receive appropriate updated training in food hygiene and handling (NMS 10.9)
- ensure that all staff read and sign to confirm their understanding, a copy of the home's policy on physical restraint and evidence of this is retained on their personnel file (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that a written record is kept of all significant illnesses of accidents or injuries to children during their placement (NMS 12.3)
- ensure that at least 4 fire drills take place in a 12 month period and are also held at night and that all staff are aware of the procedure (NMS 26.8)
- update staff health and safety and fire safety awareness training (NMS 26)