

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	18 January 2010
Inspector	David Coulter
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	11 August 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

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

The focus of the unannounced interim inspection was to determine the outcomes for young people relating to staying safe and assess the progress achieved on the recommendations made at the previous inspection. Only the national minimum standards relating to staying safe were examined. During the course of the inspection it was possible to observe a staff meeting, examine a range of records and documents and undertake discussions with a number of staff and one young person.

The home accommodates a particularly vulnerable group of young people who can, through their actions, put themselves at risk. Policies and procedures relating to the safety and well-being of young people are translated into effective working practices. The young person met and spoken with was clearly relaxed in her surroundings and at ease in the company of staff. She had no major concerns or complaints about her care and confirmed she was regularly consulted about all aspects of her life within the home.

Evidence obtained during the inspection indicates that the home is operating effectively and is operating with an experienced and well motivated staff team. Staff continuously reflect on their working practices to ensure the complex care needs of young people are being effectively met. Staff spoken with were positive about recent developments and indicated that the new management structure was working well. Actions and recommendations arising from the last inspection have been appropriately met. Although one recommendation has been identified, it is intended to improve existing practice rather than address an existing shortfall.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The recommendations arising from the last inspection have all been effectively addressed. Those relating to the health and well-being of young people have been addressed by a combination of staff training, the introduction of a number of new policies and procedures and a more robust monitoring and recording system. The specific recommendation relating to behaviour management has been addressed by the development of a new behaviour management policy and further staff training on managing challenging behaviour. The benefit of this approach can already be evidenced by the significant decrease in the number of incidents requiring physical interventions. Staff have also completed health and safety training and fire drills are now being undertaken monthly.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

A number of recommendations were made during the last inspection relating to the health and well-being of young people. These have been appropriately addressed by the introduction of a number of working practices relating to the administration and dispensing of medication, staff training and the development of more robust recording systems. Evidence indicates that the health of young people is being effectively monitored.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff aim to ensure that young people reside in a safe and secure environment. Access to the building and garden is restricted and all visitors have to report to staff on admission, produce identity and sign in. The home, which is domestic in character, is subject to regular maintenance. Fire safety equipment is tested regularly and staff initiate monthly evacuation exercises. Risk assessments are extensively used to ensure that young people and staff are kept safe.

Although the home operates as a communal unit, each young person is treated as an individual with their own specific physical, social and emotional needs. The home currently accommodates three vulnerable young women who can, through their actions, put themselves at risk both within the home and the local community. Staff identify areas of potential concern relating to each individual and develop strategies to address them. Staffing levels are adjusted in line with the changing needs of each young person. Staff receive regular training on child protection issues and are aware of their individual responsibilities in reporting concerns to the appropriate authorities.

One of the aims of the home is to help young people prepare for the demands and responsibilities of adulthood. Rather than avoid all areas of risk, young people are helped to increase their knowledge and abilities to assess risk and to think through the possible consequences of their actions. For example, young people are encouraged to develop their self-confidence to travel independently by using public transport. Staff aim to minimise risk by maintaining phone contact with young people if they are engaged in activities away from the home. Young people are made aware of the risks they could face if they leave the home without the knowledge or permission of staff, including being reported to the police. Return times are always negotiated and agreed before a young person departs. All incidents of young people not returning as planned are recorded and the actions taken on their return noted.

While young people live in a group setting, staff try to provide them with as much privacy as possible. Young people are accommodated in their own lockable rooms that they can access at any time. Each individual's room is designated as their own personal space that can be decorated to their particular taste. Information relating to each young person is kept in a secure facility and all personal issues are discussed in private. Toilets and bathrooms have appropriate locks and young people are afforded privacy when making and receiving personal phone calls.

Although staff aim to provide young people with clear boundaries about what are and are not acceptable social behaviours, the application of behaviour management plans are not always applied consistently by staff on all shifts. There is an expectation that young people will learn to assess their own behaviour. Staff reinforce positive behaviour by both praise and rewards, such as an increase in privileges. Staff use sanctions sparingly and young people are normally

offered some form of reparation to make up for their misdemeanours. Recent training has enabled staff to further develop and refine their approach to managing challenging behaviours; this has resulted in a significant decrease in physical interventions. Physical interventions are now only ever deployed if it is felt a young person is putting themselves or others at risk. All incidents of challenging behaviour are analysed by staff and discussed with young people.

The home has a written complaints policy and young people are made aware of it on admission. One young person spoken with confirmed that they would have no difficulty in lodging their complaints/concerns with any of the staff. She also confirmed that her views were regularly sought about all aspects of her life within the home. Issues raised at house meetings and through informal discussions are taken forward for consideration at staff meetings. This approach has proved successful in addressing the concerns of individuals before they develop into complaints. One complaint has been made and resolved since the last inspection. Staff regularly liaise with parents and placing authority social workers.

The home recruits staff through a well-established recruitment process. This process requires all prospective staff to undertake a criminal records bureau check, provide references and undertake an interview. All new employees have to successfully complete a probationary period before assuming their full responsibilities.

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 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):

- further develop individual behaviour management plans to provide clearer guidance for staff. (NMS 22.2)