

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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Date of last inspection	7 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 is a registered service to accommodate a maximum of eight young people aged between 13 and 18 years. The young people accommodated are male only. The home is privately run and is one of two children's homes registered to the service providers in the same county. The registered providers also operate another home in a nearby county. The home specialises in working with young people whose assessed needs are around sexuality and sexually abusive behaviour. Young people engage in regular therapy and community sessions. They are given an insight to these types of support during the initial stay, which lasts for up to 10 days.

The home is situated on the outskirts of a village with a range of facilities and amenities close by. Young people attend a school which is located on the same site as one of the other homes owned by the same organisation.

Summary

This unannounced interim inspection focused on the action and recommendations identified at the previous inspection. The key national minimum standards under the Every Child Matter's outcome staying safe were also assessed. All young people and some staff on duty engaged in conversation with the inspector. Young people speak very positively about their experiences of living at the home. They emphasised how safe they feel and the reasons why. Specific examples given include the conduct of staff, which young people praised and the benefits of therapy. Young people say they are given a 'voice', something which some of them say they have never experienced before. As a result, young people say they are listened to and treated with dignity and respect when speaking out. One of the key features for young people since the last inspection is their new school, which is now located at a different site. Major refurbishment work is well underway to improve the facilities for young people and staff at this home. The action and recommendations identified from this inspection are mainly to evidence safeguarding procedures and practical arrangements already in place.

Young people say the home has many strengths and the main one being the quality of staff including staffing numbers and staff consistency in their approach. Young people are clearly enjoying their time at this home and thrive in an environment which is often challenging but rewarding. Young people are positive that the support they receive will help them overcome their past and look towards a brighter future.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection, the registered provider was asked to improve quality assurance and monitoring systems. Existing systems have developed significantly.

Three recommendations were made at the previous inspection. The two relating to health records have been implemented. There has been no improvement with the record relating to fire drills. Therefore, this recommendation to record the times of fire drills is reinstated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Two recommendations from the previous inspection regarding the quality of health records have improved. An up-to-date letter has been obtained from the General Practitioner for the administration of homely remedies. The former manager's name has been removed from this document. The list of staff authorised to administer medication has also been updated. This list only includes details of the current staff team and provides more accurate information regarding medication procedures.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are pleased with privacy arrangements. This includes ways in which regular room checks and searches are carried out. The latter rarely occur but are clearly documented and involve young people throughout the process. Young people say that boundaries relating to privacy and confidentiality are implemented consistently by all staff. Visitors to the home are supervised to ensure that they do not have access to confidential information.

There have been no recorded complaints for some time now. The Registered Manager advised that all forms of concerns and complaints would be recorded and managed via the complaints procedure. Young people have access to the complaints procedure. However, young people say that they have no cause for concern or need to raise a complaint about the quality of service they receive.

All young people say they feel safe at this home. For example, they describe the staff team as being 'firm but fair' and 'consistent in their support during the day and night'. Young people say that everything about this home makes them feel safe even at times when they are having an 'off' day. One young person describes the home as a place which gives them a sense of security; something they have never experienced before. Young people relate well to the types of therapy they receive. This helps them to work through feelings and past experiences which may impact on their safety and well-being. Safeguarding policies and procedures are being revised and updated with evidence of recent research being taken into account. This enables staff to keep abreast of current practice.

Young people have a good understanding of bullying types of behaviour. This, they say, is discussed in various forums including group therapy and key worker meetings. Young people do not identify bullying as an issue in the home. Young people say that they have great trust in the staff whom they can rely on to deal with any triggers of unacceptable behaviours.

Work is undertaken proactively with young people to prevent incidents involving absence from the home without authority. This includes the implementation of risk assessments and therapeutic intervention. Incidents involving young people being absent from the home without authority are rare. The management of these incidents is clearly set out in a written procedure which has recently been updated. However, the written procedure does not state that, if possible, a young person is seen by their social worker or independent person on their return to the home.

Young people say they are pleased with the way in which behavioural management systems are implemented as this helps them to stay focused. Young people are of the opinion that

sanctions are fair and reasonable. They are involved in the process and can relate sanctions to unacceptable behaviours. All sanctions imposed are documented and monitored by the Registered Manager. The term 'grounding' is used frequently in the sanctions record. Supporting evidence is recorded in other documents, such as the daily log, to explain the types of grounding. However, similar details are not recorded in the sanctions record, which does not provide a complete overview when 'grounding' is imposed. The use of physical intervention is very rarely used. Young people's experience is that this is hardly or never used. All staff are trained in the home's preferred methods of intervention. This training is repeated at regular intervals to ensure that staff are kept up-to-date with practice. Significant incidents involving young people are recorded centrally and monitored. This provides key information on the broad range of incidents and issues being dealt with.

Young people and staff are familiar with fire evacuation procedures and confirm that these take place at various times including evenings and very early mornings. The times of fire drills are not being recorded as recommended at the previous inspection. As a result, it is not possible to know exactly when drills are taking place. Routine fire safety checks are kept up-to-date by staff and external contractors.

The quality of vetting procedures for new staff minimises the risk of young people being exposed to potential abusers. Supporting evidence includes the retention of interview notes, the verification of references and obtaining up-to-date Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks. There are occasions when staff are appointed with an existing CRB check. A written risk management process is in place. This is currently being implemented for compliance with guidance when appointing staff with an existing CRB check. Currently, external contractors are visiting the home to carry out building work. These visitors are appropriately supervised by staff and have access to the home when young people are at school. However, there are no written procedures or agreements in support of the monitoring and management of such visitors.

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 good.

The action from the previous inspection to improve quality assurance and monitoring systems is met. Significant work has been done to revise the existing development plan. As a result, the annual development plan is now more comprehensive. It takes into account a broader range of aims and objectives not only for the business but also for young people and staff. The revised plan also includes generic objectives for the organisation and timescales for achievements.

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	devise and implement written procedures to demonstrate the monitoring and management of visiting contractors to the home. (Reg 16(1)(a))	24 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- update the written procedure on 'absence without authority' to include details that, if possible, a young person is seen by their social worker or independent person on their return to the home. Where this is not possible, the reasons are recorded and agreed with the placing authority. (NMS 19.4)
- provide further information in the sanctions record when 'grounding' is imposed (NMS 22.10)
- include the times of drills in the record of fire drills. (NMS 26)