

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Gavin Thomas
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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 children aged between 13 and 18 years. The children 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 children who have experienced abuse in their lives and helps them to come to terms with a range of behaviours.

The home is situated on the outskirts of a village with a range of facilities and amenities close by. The home provides full time education at one of the other homes.

Summary

At this unannounced full inspection, all key standards were inspected. This is a good service with outstanding features. Young people's progress and development are enhanced through the effectiveness of therapy and strong relationships with all staff. Excellent opportunities are created for young people to participate in a wide range of recreational and educational activities. They also benefit from the range of tasks undertaken to develop independence skills. Extensive work is undertaken with external agencies such as health professionals to ensure that young people's holistic needs are met. The school is no longer attached to these premises and has relocated. As a result, significant work is planned to improve young people's accommodation and the grounds of the home. The home excels in meeting a range of diverse needs. However, current quality assurance and reporting systems do not reflect these achievements and planned changes.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The Registered Manager was asked to improve the quality of some of the documents. This has now been achieved. The correct contact details for Ofsted are included in the complaints procedure. The information recorded in the restraint record is monitored more closely and all staff files have been updated with positive proof of identity in the form of recent photograph.

Fire safety systems are more enhanced now by ensuring that fire call points are tested weekly and recorded.

Significant progress is being made towards the implementation of a more robust and written quality assurance process although this is not fully achieved.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people enjoy a balanced and varied diet. Young people say that meals are well prepared and this includes meals prepared by themselves. Opportunities for preparing meals are encouraged with varying levels of staff support. Cooking and dining facilities are suitable for the numbers of young people to share meals together at any one time.

Young people's health needs are clearly identified in written health plans which are monitored and reviewed regularly. Prompt action is taken to ensure that young people receive appropriate health services. This includes the involvement of specialist health services and primary care treatments. Parents describe the home's contribution towards young people's health as being excellent. Young people say they are pleased with the quality of support they receive. In particular, the in-house support regarding their emotional wellbeing. Extensive work is undertaken for engaging young people in open and honest discussions about healthy lifestyles. This includes guidance and support on social issues, relationships and sexual activity, effects of smoking and alcohol abuse and hygiene. The therapeutic input provides a strong foundation regarding health and wellbeing and this is well received by young people.

Records relating to the receipt, administration and disposal of medication are kept up to date. This includes records for controlled drugs. A range of other records kept are out of date, such as the General Practitioner's approval for administering homely remedies which includes details of the former manager and a list of staff signatures which includes details of former staff. The service is in receipt of written guidance on the management of medicines and dedicated locked cabinets are provided for the storage of medicines. Staff receive in house training on medication and enhanced training is being explored through an external facilitator.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are accommodated in single rooms and rules regarding privacy and respect for others are clearly defined. Written policies and procedures on confidentiality are being revised and updated. Sensitive matters are managed and discussed appropriately.

An established complaints and representation process is in place and known to young people and their representatives. Young people are happy with the service and confident that they could talk to staff about anything at any time of the day. The home has not received any complaints for a considerable period of time.

Systems are in place for promoting young people's safety and welfare. Staff have attended various levels of training on safeguarding within the last year. This is also included in the induction for new staff. The policy on 'safeguarding children' is now included in the Statement of Purpose. Young people say that they feel safe and well cared for. They also say that the service helps them to learn about keeping themselves safe. Processes for monitoring and responding to young people's safety are thorough and includes consultation with external professionals and direct input from the therapists.

The environment reflects a zero tolerance towards bullying. This topic is raised with young people in a number of ways and prompt action is taken in response to known or suspected issues. A policy on countering bullying is in place. Details relating to bullying are also included in documents written for the benefit of young people.

Written procedures are in place for responding to young people who are absent from care without authority. External professionals say that joint working with this service for promoting young people's safety is effective. Incident records relating to young people missing from care are detailed and used effectively for monitoring and reviewing young people's needs, risk assessments and support strategies.

Young people are supported to develop socially accepted behaviours through care planning which includes therapy and consultation. Acceptable behaviours are also encouraged through the effective use of a rewards system. Young people are fully aware of their rights. They also describe behavioural management systems as being fair. All staff have attended updated training on the home's preferred method of physical intervention known as PRICE (Protecting Rights In a Caring Environment). This training and methods of intervention includes programmes for deescalating situations and managing challenging behaviours. Sanctions and incidents of physical intervention are recorded in dedicated, bound and numbered books. All incidents or issues relating to behaviours at school or in the home are recorded and monitored. Young people are given the opportunity to discuss incidents either individually or as part of the community.

Health and safety systems are kept up to date. This includes routine testing for gas, electrical and fire equipment. Young people's safety is enhanced by ensuring that health and safety risk assessments are reviewed and updated at least annually and other times when necessary. Staff have attended a range of health and safety courses including fire safety, first aid and food hygiene.

Routine fire safety checks are carried out by staff and an external contractor. These include visual checks of the premises, appliances and efficiency of the fire detection system. The frequency of fire drills exceed the national minimum standard but does not include the time of drills.

Recruitment processes are strong with clear evidence of a candidate's suitability. This includes the retention of interview records, verification of references and evidence of suitability checks carried out under Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Individual staff files are in very good order and kept confidentially. Staff files include signed agreements for adhering to codes of confidentiality and the use of control and restraint. There are occasions when portable Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks are accepted when appointing new staff. Although these do not amount to a fresh check, enhanced checks are not carried out as set out in the guidance when portable checks are used.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

All young people benefit immensely from on going therapy and continuous assessment of their needs. Support strategies are tailored in accordance with young people's assessed needs. Young people are involved in the planning of support programmes. This is enhanced through the benefits of an established key worker system which all young people are familiar with. Young people are supported to take controlled risks which are carefully managed and clearly linked to therapeutic support and independence training. Young people say that they are pleased with the varying levels of support including the different types of therapy. Parents say that the quality of support is outstanding and enables young people to successfully participate in activities and hobbies outside of the home. Therapy is provided by two qualified therapists. The models of therapy and risk management processes are being modified in consultation with the therapists.

The school has relocated to a different site. Young people will access the new school provision from September 2009. The education service provided by the organisation is highly valued by young people and their parents. Young people are extremely positive about the education

provisions and parents are delighted with young people's educational achievement and opportunities to participate in extra curricular activities. Young people say they are pleased with the opportunities for progressing on to college placements. They are also happy to be members of various clubs.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Care planning processes are thorough and takes into account a broad range of needs including health, emotional wellbeing, education, identity and personal goals. Young people are encouraged to participate in care planning processes. Robust procedures are in place for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of care plans. This includes regular reviews, and monthly reports. Associated care planning records such as behavioural management plans and risk assessments are clear and linked to young people's assessments and therapeutic input. The methods for recording young people's assessments and care plans are being modified.

Young people are fully supported to participate in their reviews. Support is provided before, during and after reviews. This includes staff representation at reviews. Support strategies are carefully planned and involves input from the therapists. Reports are presented by the service for young people's reviews and outcomes of reviews are clearly recorded.

Contact arrangements are agreed with young people's placing authorities. Practical and emotional support is provided in accordance with young people's needs and circumstances. Any restrictions and agreed arrangements are clearly recorded. Outcomes of contact meetings are also recorded and reviewed.

The admissions criteria is robust and includes a period of residential assessment. This process is mutual between the young person and the household which means that the needs of the young person concerned and the existing group are taken into account. Current admissions processes are being reviewed to include the input of the therapists at an earlier stage. Extensive work is carried out to support young people to express and cope with their feelings about living away from home. Young people say the availability of staff to talk to about their feelings anytime during the day or night helps make them feel secure.

Consultation with young people is wide ranging and includes effective communication between the home and the school. Young people's views are taken seriously and outcomes of meetings with young people are recorded in detail. Young people say that they are able to make their views known and are able to contribute to the running of the home. Current processes for formally consulting with young people, parents and placing authorities about the overall operation of the home are being reviewed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Preparatory work undertaken with young people for moving on successfully is linked to all aspects of care planning and therapy. Particular attention is given to risk management, practical support and coping strategies. Vigorous processes are in place for reviewing young people's responses to taking part in activities for developing the knowledge and skills for independence learning. The semi independent home owned by the organisation is optional for young people to move to. Young people say that this is an incentive and encouragement to do well.

Young people's accommodation and the garden provides adequate space for recreation and sporting activities. Outside space is vast and includes the provision of benches, a paved area for activities and facilities for the storage of young people's equipment. The home is in need of redecorating and refurbishment. However, significant changes have been identified to improve these standards. This will include use of the disused classrooms, improvements to the decorative state of the home including floor covering and improvements to the exterior of the home. Scheduled work is included in the organisation's business plan.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A Statement of Purpose and Children's Guide are in place. Both documents are comprehensive and includes detailed information about how the home operates.

Young people are supported and cared for by a staff team with a wide range of skills and experiences. Clear arrangements are in place for staff to deputise in the absence of the Registered Manager and all senior staff have relevant experience and a sound knowledge about the service. The Registered Manager is suitably qualified and experienced and the proprietors have regular contact with the home. At least 80% of the staff team have achieved the National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in the caring for children and young people. Staff rotas are designed to allow proper time for handovers between shifts. Staff disciplinary procedures are in place and these are known to all staff.

Continuity of staffing is achieved at all times and includes staff of both genders. The therapists and the Registered Manager are supernumerary to the staff team although the Registered Manager is more involved with young people during peak times such as school holidays. External agency staff are used to cover shifts as a last resort and the maximum number of staff on duty at any one time varies in accordance with the needs and numbers of young people. Additional staffing and work patterns also vary during school holidays to ensure that young people are adequately supervised and engaged in meaningful activities.

All new staff are now working towards a revised induction process. Staff say that this process is thorough and informative. All staff have access to a range of training opportunities and evidence of training undertaken is retained on staff files. Staff performances and competencies are formally reviewed through monthly supervisions and annual appraisals. In addition, staff attend supervision with the therapists every fortnight. The therapists receive professional supervision which is independent to this service.

An organisational business plan is in place which focuses mainly on property services and the school. Progress is being made for developing quality assurance and monitoring systems. However, this is still under discussion and a full written development plan including a report of any review carried out is not yet in place. Some of the key areas identified for developing and reporting on the quality of care includes the admissions process, the therapeutic model, risk management, educational achievement and attainment, reporting on formal consultation with young people, parents and stakeholders, effectiveness of young people's placements and staffing.

Young people's files are in very good order and includes the necessary information as required under Schedule 3 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. These files are kept securely.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Young people enjoy a wide selection of foods and benefit from the opportunities to participate in meal preparation. Young people are consulted about their health needs and extensive work is undertaken to ensure that young people have access to relevant health care assessments and treatments. There are no complaints about this service and safeguarding processes are well managed including effective working relationships with external professionals. Young people are fully aware of their rights. They are also fully supported to understand and cope with any limitations or restrictions regarding their placement. Opportunities are created for ensuring that staff are always available to talk to young people. This includes planned meetings with therapists and informal discussions at any time of the day. Young people say they feel listened to and benefit from living in an environment where they don't feel 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 Childrens Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
33	improve current quality assurance and monitoring systems to include a more detailed written annual development plan and written reports in respect of any reviews carried out. (Regulation 34-(1)(a)(b),(2),(3))	30 October 2009

Recommendations

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

- update the written approval from the General Practitioner regarding the administration of homely remedies with details of the current manager. (NMS 13)
- update the list of staff approved for administering medication. (NMS 13)
- include the times of drills in the record of fire drills. (NMS 26)