

Inspection report for Children's Home

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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 centre is located in an isolated and rural location. Set in a former agricultural property, the centre functions as a base from which young people in crisis aged from 11 to 17 years are supported to undertake a wide range of adventurous outdoor activities in which the staff are trained and licensed to provide leadership and guidance. The centre offers placements which are short-term for up to 10 young people, most of whom are placed on an emergency basis following a recent history of placement breakdown and difficult or risky behaviour. The placements are aimed primarily at helping young people to gain some stability and control in their lives.

The centre has a full-time manager, supported by a deputy and an adventurous activities manager. Each of the three operational shifts consists of two team seniors and a group of residential care workers, some of whom are qualified instructors for a range of outward-bound activities.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was a full unannounced inspection that focused on key national minimum standards. Seven young people were living at the centre and a number were present during the visit. Two young people directly participated in some of the inspection process.

The overall judgement for this service is good. Managers provide consistent, practical leadership which supports the team of staff to help young people successfully participate in a varied and challenging programme of outward-bound activities. Young people's safety and protection is being supported by an experienced and properly trained staff team.

Improvements since the last inspection

As a result of the last inspection, the provider was required to improve the recording of information about sanctions given to young people. This has now been completed, with records reflecting the views expressed by young people who receive sanctions.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people receive a good service that is clearly focused on meeting individual needs and promoting good health. Young people usually arrive at the centre at short notice and in crisis. Staff prioritise and support access to health care services that is based on immediate and presenting health concerns and needs. This means accessing a range of health care that can include hospital admissions as well as routine and more specialist community services. Staff actively engage young people in a range of health related topics which encourages them to learn about potential risks to their own health and fitness. For instance, some young people continue to smoke but staff regularly talk to them about the risks and the support available to stop.

Young people's health and safety is promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage and administration medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following individual prescription instructions in most cases. Staff are able to respond to accidents and unforeseen medical needs because parental consents are in place. They also have access to first aid boxes and have been trained to administer first aid when needed.

Young people are encouraged and supported to exercise and eat healthily and they are provided with practical support regarding their diet, fitness and food choices. Staff understand the importance of a varied diet along with regular exercise. Young people safely participate in a full and varied range of outward-bound activities that keeps them active. Menus are varied and reflect the diversity, diets and some preferences of young people. In addition, some young people help out with cooking as well as developing their outdoor craft and camping skills in terms of food preparation.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's safety and protection is effectively promoted by staff at the centre. Young people confirm that they feel safe in their accommodation and during their outward-bound activities and adventures. This is because clear organisational procedures and guidance are followed that outline staff roles and responsibilities in relation to managing risks and keeping young people safe. Managers provide good day-to-day direction and support to the staff team to ensure care practice and routines are matched to changing risks and needs of individual young people.

Staff receive a range of induction and refresher training to support them in their daily work with young people. This helps to ensure that staff are equipped with the right knowledge and understanding to safeguard everyone in their care. Staff know what action to take if there are concerns and this includes newly appointed staff. Young people are protected from bullying; staff closely monitor young people's relationships

and any poor behaviour is quickly challenged. Bullying behaviour is not tolerated and staff model their behaviour in a way that promotes clear and reasonable boundaries that help to practically demonstrate how to conduct friendly, respectful relationships.

Young people are encouraged and motivated to behave in ways that are socially acceptable and they can earn extra activities and rewards for good behaviour. Staff are trained in appropriate behaviour management practices and young people feel that the rules are fair. Records demonstrate that for some young people the use of physical restraint is a necessary part of managing immediate risks or dangerous behaviour. Formal sanctions are also used which are predominantly financial and linked mainly to property damage. Young people are encouraged to express their views and opinions about how they are helped to manage their behaviour and these are recorded when given. The overall strategy of the staff team is to talk to young people and negotiate adjustments and improvements in their behaviour. Staff focus on the positives and the successes achieved through the outward-bound programme. Young people are given many chances to adjust and improve inappropriate behaviours before formal sanctions are used.

Many young people have significant histories of placing themselves and others at risk which includes considerable patterns of absconding behaviour or being missing from care. While staff at the centre are able to engage young people through a planned and structured outward-bound programme this does not necessarily prevent further incidents of absconding behaviour from occurring. When these events do occur, staff use established procedures and reporting routines to try and reduce risks and quickly gain the safe return of young people to the centre.

The home has good systems in place to deal with complaints and concerns. Young people know how to complain and they have used the home's procedure on a number of occasions to raise concerns. Managers have responded appropriately to these matters. However, the centre's records do not always reflect resolutions or what managers have done when a complainant is not satisfied with a particular outcome.

Young people's protection is also promoted through safe and careful selection and vetting processes for all new staff. The organisation has clearly defined systems in place that ensures that all the necessary checks have been completed and are acceptable prior to any new member of staff starting work at the centre. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection and is followed in respect of all staff currently employed. Visitors to the centre are supervised and monitored according to the purpose of their visit and the level of contact with young people. This ensures young people's safety is promoted through a proportionate response to supervising visitors.

The centre provides young people with appropriate levels of physical safety and security. A strong emphasis is placed on delivering safe outward-bound activities by qualified instructors who are well informed about the risks associated with each activity. This is achieved through an established risk assessment process that is overseen by managers. Outdoor equipment is checked frequently by competent staff

and regular audits take place to inform the activities manager of any replacement needs. In addition, health and safety checks are made of the accommodation, fire drills and evacuations are practised regularly and fire equipment is serviced at appropriate intervals.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are provided with good support to help them successfully participate in a challenging and engaging outward-bound programme. Activities are well planned and organised. Young people are encouraged and supported to learn new skills which help them successfully complete testing activities. Staff are able to shape their support according to the individual needs of each young person. Young people are very positive about their experiences and achievements. They benefit from a positive culture of engagement and dialogue which means individual needs are well known and risks are managed effectively.

The home's records reflect the diverse and individualised needs of each young person. Staff practice in a non-discriminatory way and understand the importance of promoting social inclusion and the need to challenge any form of unfair treatment or discrimination.

During young people's short stay at the centre they are able to engage in education and learning through the availability of an onsite school resource. The education timetable is clearly incorporated into weekly planners to assist with delivering the right support at the right time. Staff support young people in a range of ways to ensure their educational needs are being met. For example, ensuring young people can prepare and take their GCSE examinations. Also, the centre has a developing vocational award scheme that overlaps and incorporates much of the activity based learning young people are engaged in. Through these growing programmes, young people are able to gain recognised awards and vocational qualifications.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Each young person has a placement plan which is used alongside other information to ensure the centre's staff are fully informed about individual needs. Young people are involved in care planning processes and spend time talking with staff about their progress and any problems. Young people also have their say in more formal reviews about their care and placement arrangements. This helps placing social workers and centre staff to engage with young people about important decisions regarding their futures.

Staff are aware of the need to listen to young people and arrangements exist that allow young people to express themselves and share their views. This happens in a number of different ways; for example, through informal one-to-one discussions with

staff and at young people's meetings. The centre's records reflect some of these discussions and show that staff are responding positively and practically to young people's suggestions about the operation of the centre.

Young people are fully supported to stay in touch with their families. Contact arrangements for young people are clearly defined including any restrictions or limitations. Staff understand the value and meaning to young people of these arrangements and work hard to ensure contact is positive. Where this is not the case, staff provide emotional support to try and counter difficult or upsetting experiences.

Young people are provided with appropriate support when they move in and leave the centre. Young people are expected to engage in an outward-bound programme on arrival. Staff are skilled and experienced in helping each young person engage in this programme, helping to build young people's confidence and participation, this is especially so for those young people who have no experience of outdoor activities.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with satisfactory living accommodation which benefits from periodic improvements in terms décor and furnishings. Generally, the centre and its communal areas are clean and tidy. The centre has designated personnel who follow an updated maintenance programme determined mainly by health and safety needs. Some of this work is deemed outside the scope of the in-house maintenance team which sometimes creates a list of outstanding work. For instance, a path leading to young people's living accommodation is uneven and not very safe which increases the risks of anyone using it having an accident.

Young people are provided with individual bedrooms which are suitably maintained. Some bedrooms are personalised and decorated to achieve the choices and preferences of individual young people. Young people have access to sufficient levels of communal space which gives them choices regarding their recreational and leisure time. The home provides young people with sufficient bath, shower and toilet facilities which provide acceptable levels of privacy.

Young people are helped to develop their life and independent skills during their stay at the centre. Placements are relatively short in duration and focused on the outward-bound programme which supports and encourages personal development and achievement. In addition, staff use the centre's existing domestic routines and arrangements to coach some young people in preparation for independent living.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Information about the centre's operation is clearly reflected in the Statement of Purpose. The young person's guide also provides information in a readable format that outlines what can be expected from the service. Staff maintain up-to-date case records for each young person which clearly evidences an individual's needs, development and progress.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. Managers and staff have a clear understanding and take a balanced approach to implementing care practices that help match young people's needs, identities and backgrounds. This results in beneficial care, support and supervision being provided to each young person. Some staff have undertaken training to further develop their understanding of equality and diversity and how this impacts on meeting young people's needs.

Young people are being supported by improved management and staffing arrangements that are in line with the centre's current stated aims and purpose. Additional team seniors have been recruited to support the planning, organisation and supervision of the shift teams. This has brought practical benefits to managing day-to-day operations, and is an indication of a service that is developing and adapting to ensure young people's needs are met. The manager and deputy provide clear leadership to the trained staff team in support of their work with young people. Staffing arrangements are flexible and organised in a way that helps manage the changing risks and needs of each young person. There are clear lines of accountability between shift teams and successful communication systems ensure that young people's daily needs are met and any risks managed safely.

The service has a cycle of quality assurance activities that produces a detailed range of information about the centre's operation. This includes regular monitoring visits from an organisational representative as well as internal management audits. The Registered Manager is well informed about successes as well as areas that the home needs to develop or strengthen for the benefit of young people.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
16	ensure that a written record is made of any complaint, the	31/10/2010

	action taken in response, and the outcome of the investigation (Regulation 24(5))	
24	ensure that all identified maintenance and repairs for the centre are carried out promptly. (Regulation 31(2)(d))	31/10/2010