

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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Date of last inspection	18 December 2008
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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

The centre occupies 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 usually precipitated by difficult or risky behaviour. The placements are aimed primarily at engendering stability and control.

The centre has a full-time manager, supported by an adventurous activities manager. Each of the three operational shifts is led by a team leader and consists of one senior and a number of residential care worker/instructors based on the needs and risks of young people accommodated. These are supported by a range of ancillary staff who contribute to the domestic arrangements of the centre.

Summary

This was a full unannounced inspection that concentrated on key National Minimum Standards. Seven young people were living at the centre at the time of the visit. The inspection focused on areas related to being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a positive contribution, achieving economic wellbeing and how staffing and management arrangements support the operation of the home.

The overall judgement for this service is satisfactory. Young people are well supported through their outward-bound programmes. The centre is successful at motivating each young person to achieve their potential when participating in activities. However, more needs to be done to ensure care, support and education is more consistent with the stated aims of the service.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Out of the four requirements made at the last inspection two have been repeated. These are in relation to the upkeep and maintenance of the centre and to achieve the required recording standards for sanctions given to young people.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's health is being adequately monitored and promoted because staff have access to a satisfactory range of information that informs them about individual needs. In addition, the centre has practical arrangements in place to ensure appointments and visits to health care services are completed in a way that meets with each young person's needs. Staff practice is underpinned by health related policies, procedures and training that helps guide the team in carrying out their roles and responsibilities.

Young people are encouraged and supported to exercise and eat healthily. They safely participate in a full and varied range of outward-bound activities that keeps them active. Staff are aware

of the need to monitor what young people eat and to ensure their diets are balanced and varied. Young people are able to influence menus because staff take time to plan and organise meals that sometimes fit with individual choices and preferences. New arrangements for eating away from the centre on camping activities has improved the choices young people can make in these circumstances.

Young people's medication is safely stored in lockable storage cabinets. The home uses established recording formats to ensure all drugs are appropriately recorded at the point of receipt and disposal. Generally, young people's medication is being safely administered because records show that prescription instructions are being followed in most cases. However, some records are incomplete, for example, information about allergies is not always recorded, second signatures are sometimes missing from the controlled drug register, information about maximum doses allowed in any 24-hour period is missing. Sometimes the home's records do not reflect why medication has not been given to young people which brings into question the reasons for staff not following prescription instructions. The administration of medication is not robust enough to achieve safe or consistent practices which could affect the health and safety of young people.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Overall, the centre offers young people a place of safety and protection. Placements are usually made within short timescales and this is because the nature of the service is to admit young people in circumstances that are deemed to be emergency situations. Many young people have significant histories of placing themselves or others at risk which include 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 sometimes occurring. When these events do occur, staff use the centre's established procedures and reporting routines to try and keep risks to young people at a minimum.

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 each activity. This is done 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 renewal or replacement needs. In addition, health and safety checks are made of the accommodation, fire drills and evacuations are practiced regularly and fire equipment is serviced at appropriate intervals. However, fire safety routines are not underpinned by any recent or relevant training.

Generally, young people's privacy and confidentiality is respected although some minor shortfalls in this area are apparent and relate to some general records which do not necessarily need to identify young people directly. Young people are routinely encouraged to communicate any concerns or complaints they may have. The home keeps a record of all complaints and the compliant log demonstrates that young people are listened to and agreed outcomes are achieved. Young people state that they can go to staff for help and support if they have any concerns or complaints. The centre has established systems and procedures in place to report and manage any child protection concern and these arrangements are supported by staff training in this important area of the centre's operation.

In the main, young people are provided with the right guidance and support to help them manage their behaviour. This is supported by a general reward programme that is sometimes individualised to suit the needs and circumstances of individual young people. Young people state that staff are fair. Staff receive regular training in behaviour management practices which also includes the use of physical restraint. The centre's records show that staff have used physical interventions for some young people as a last resort and to keep them safe. Where formal sanctions are given for poor behaviour records are made of these events so the circumstances can be evaluated for their effectiveness. These records are variable in relation to the required information and detail. For instance, records give no indication of young people's views and opinions about a particular event or its outcome.

Generally, incidents of bullying behaviour are managed quickly, staff and young people know that unwanted behaviour of any kind is not acceptable. However, there is variability in some staff responses to this kind of behaviour. Some staff are more active in their interventions than others which determines the quality of support and overall effectiveness in managing these circumstances. Victims of bullying behaviour are not necessarily benefiting from timely or preventative staff practices.

Young people's protection is supported by safe recruitment, selection and vetting practices for all new staff. The centre has a clearly defined system in place that ensures all necessary checks have been completed and are acceptable prior to any staff member starting work in the home. A written record of this process is maintained for inspection and is followed in respect of all staff currently employed.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is inadequate.

Generally, young people are provided with the necessary support to help them successfully participate in the centre's aims of delivering a challenging outward-bound programme. Engagement in structured well planned activities is a strength of the staff team. Young people are positive about their experiences and achievements. However, some aspects of their care and support is not matched to the centre's stated aims or standards of service. For instance, some staff use abusive language when addressing young people. Where young people have identified legitimate beliefs or religions for themselves some staff are not necessarily supportive or understanding. The new manager has already started to address some of these issues.

While the centre is able to achieve high rates of successful participation in outdoor activities some aspects of the day-to-day care and support young people receive fall below expected standards. This is because basic thresholds of professional behaviour are not being achieved by all staff.

Staff have access to a range of information that helps them have an understanding and awareness of individual needs which also includes details about young people's religion, culture and identity. The home's records show that where these needs have been identified most staff work in a way that ensures their choices and preferences are supported and met. This is underpinned by organisational training called Anti-discrimination, Equal Opportunities and Anti-oppressive Practice Training which some staff have attended.

Arrangements for young people's education is uncoordinated and inconsistent. Some young people have been engaged in limited educational sessions but this engagement is in the absence

of any coherent curriculum based timetable. The provision of education does not match the stated aims in the centre's statement of purpose. The document highlights the use of well established vocational award schemes such as the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. There is little evidence that this programme is linked to more formal educational routines or plans. The service has no recent track record in delivering education that meets young people's needs. Currently, the arrangements for education are inadequate but the centre has recruited a new fulltime teacher to start in September.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are encouraged and supported to be involved in their plan of care and future arrangements. Placement plans detail the care and support needed and how this is to be provided to young people. Young people are involved in their care planning and have regular opportunities to discuss their needs with staff. Reviews take place at regular intervals and are usually held within the centre. Young people are encouraged to attend and contribute to these meetings. Staff produce information on a regular basis about young people's care and progress and regularly share this information with placing social workers.

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 which usually includes camping. Staff are skilled and experienced in helping each young person engage in this programme, helping to build their confidence and participation, this is especially so for those young people who have no previous experience.

Young people are fully supported to stay in touch with significant people in their lives. Records demonstrate that contact for young people is clearly defined and any restrictions are discussed and recorded. A strength of the centre is the way in which the staff team ensure contact is promoted but in a way that is defined as being safe and appropriate. Information is effectively shared with shift teams to ensure young people are safeguarded.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are provided with satisfactory living accommodation which has benefited from some improvements in terms décor, fixtures and fittings. Generally, the centre is clean and tidy. Some bedrooms are personalised and decorated to achieve the choices and preferences of individual young people. 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 has created a list of outstanding work. For instance, the access drive to the centre is dangerous, presenting significant risks to visiting drivers.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Young people are being supported by management and staffing arrangements that are in line with the centre's current stated aims and purpose. The new manager provides 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 changing risks and needs of each young

person. The centre has been without a Registered Manager for sometime. The current manager is in the process of applying to Ofsted to start the registration process.

Young people are provided with a written guide in an appropriate format to inform them about the centre. The guide is easy to read and provides a straight forward description of what young people can expect from the staff team and what the centre expects from young people in terms of boundaries and behaviour.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The manager is actively involved in the day-to-day operation of the centre and has clear expectations that the staff team will achieve the best possible outcomes for all young people in their care. The staff rota is planned in advance and ensures that the minimum staffing levels are achieved at any one time. The staff group work in three separate teams and the manager always tries to arranged the rota according to the mix of skills and experience within the team. Arrangements are in place to cover staff absences and gaps in the rota are usually compensated for by using staff that are already known to young people. There is an on-call system that staff can use to gain access to advice and guidance when managers are not at work.

The registered provider and manager have clear organisational processes in place to monitor and audit the quality of care being provided to young people. Regular monitoring visits are undertaken by an external manager to evaluate how the centre is operating. Recent monitoring reports have identified that the home is making good progress but some shortfalls still exist. The manager does not provide written responses to monitoring visits so it is difficult to determine what is being done to address shortfalls that are repeated or continue to be outstanding.

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
13	ensure a written record is kept of the administration of any medication to any young person (Regulation 21)	31 August 2009
14	ensure young people make use of educational facilities appropriate to their age, aptitude, needs, interests and potential (Regulation 18)	30 September 2009
14	ensure the routines of the centre are organised so as to further young people's participation in education (Regulation 18)	30 September 2009
16	ensure all young people are protected from bullying (Regulation 16)	31 August 2009
22	maintain an accurate and up to date record of sanctions used (Regulation 17)	30 September 2009

24	ensure that all maintenance, renewal and repair programmes for the building, furniture and equipment are carried out promptly (Regulation 31)	31 October 2009
26	make arrangements for persons working in the home to receive suitable and regular training in fire prevention (Regulation 32)	30 September 2009
34	ensure Ofsted is in receipt of a completed application to determine the fitness of the manager to be registered (Regulation 8).	30 September 2009

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people's privacy and confidentiality is maintained in all areas of the home's operation (National Minimum Standards 9)
- ensure the registered manager provides details of the action taken in response to issues of concern raised in monthly Regulation 33 reports (National Minimum Standards 32).