

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Julian Mason
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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

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 a team senior and a group of residential care workers, some of whom are qualified instructors for a range of outward-bound activities.

Summary

This was an announced interim inspection. The visit concentrated on the eight statutory requirements and two good practice recommendations made at the last key inspection in August 2009. In addition, the Every Child Matters outcome for staying safe was inspected. At the time of the inspection, five young people were living at the centre but were not present during the visit.

At the last key inspection the centre was assessed as satisfactory. Following this inspection the overall judgement remains the same. This judgement will be reviewed at the centre's next full inspection when all key national minimum standards will be re-assessed.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The centre was required to make a number of improvements following the last inspection. The manager has implemented most of the requirements and recommendations and made improvements to written records of all administered medication, young people's access to education, responses to bullying behaviour and fire prevention training. In addition, the manager ensures that the home's records maintain young people's confidentiality and that responses to shortfalls identified during monthly monitoring visits are clearly recorded.

One requirement continues to be addressed which relates to the on-going programme of maintenance and improvement to the accommodation, grounds and facilities. One action has been repeated from the last visit and this is to do with the variability of the centre's records regarding the use of sanctions.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's medication is safely stored, administered and managed through established practice routines that are underpinned by the centre's medicines policy.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people benefit from a residential service that has a clear focus on safeguarding and protection matters. In particular, the manager plays a key role in ensuring that all staff are kept up to date with important information that helps them to manage risks effectively. This means that staff working directly with young people can keep them safe because they are well informed. The manager also has helpful links and works in partnership with external lead agencies who have important responsibilities for safeguarding young people in their area.

The centre's operation ensures that young people's privacy is respected and information about them is kept securely and confidentially. The centre has a range of appropriate policies and procedures that help guide staff to deliver a safe service. They receive repeated training in key areas of their work such as behaviour management, child protection and health and safety. These training arrangements help to reinforce expected standards of staff practice. Young people are able to safely participate in a full outward-bound programme because activities are well planned and organised by a competent team of trained instructors.

The manager ensures that no new member of staff starts work at the centre until all the necessary vetting checks have been completed. These arrangements help to ensure that staff working at the centre are suitable to work within a children's service. All visitors to the home are monitored because they are required to provide evidence of their identity and to sign a visitors' book.

Further areas of the centre's operation also support young people's safety and welfare. For instance, there are established routines and reporting procedures in place when young people are away from the centre without permission. Overall, young people are encouraged to express their views and opinions about the service and any complaints are quickly dealt with. Staff promote an environment where bullying behaviour is not tolerated and any unacceptable behaviour is challenged. There are established systems and procedures in place to ensure that the health and safety of young people is monitored and promoted. For example, fire prevention systems are checked and serviced regularly, well rehearsed emergency evacuation procedures are carried out and risk assessments are completed to inform staff about environmental safety issues. Outward-bound activities are also fully assessed so young people can participate in the programme without being exposed to avoidable risks. The outward-bound operation of the centre continues to be approved through its registration with the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

Overall, young people are provided with helpful guidance and support to manage their behaviour. The centre has a number of policies and procedures that relate to behaviour management and staff receive regular training to remind them of their role and responsibilities. In addition, each young person has information in their placement plan that provides guidance to staff about how to manage challenging or risky behaviours. Young people are not exposed to any over use of physical restraint as the centre's records demonstrate that these incidents only occur when absolutely necessary. When young people are held, most of these circumstances are short in duration.

Where formal sanctions are given for poor behaviour, records are made of these circumstances so the interventions can be evaluated for their effectiveness. The written records are variable

in relation to the required information and detail. For instance, records do not give any indication of a young person's view about a particular event or its outcome. This brings into question whether or not young people are being consulted about this particular area of the centre's operation.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

Current arrangements for young people's education is satisfactory. The centre has a new full-time teacher in post, the classroom environment has been improved and the way in which education is accessed and delivered is more flexible. Each young person's educational timetable is tailored to reflect a mixture of vocational and academic study depending on the needs of each individual. The centre's school is becoming more involved in young people's outward-bound programmes. As a consequence, these experiences are starting to be used towards nationally accredited qualifications. Although young people are at the centre for a relatively short period of time they are being provided with learning and development opportunities to help them through their education.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The centre is well situated for its purpose being in an isolated position but close to many locations that provide for ideal outward-bound activities. Young people are provided with adequately furnished and decorated accommodation that is clean and tidy. They are encouraged to personalise their own rooms with pictures, posters and photographs. The centre has benefited from some recent investment in the buildings, fixtures and fittings with further planned expenditure for early 2010.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

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 external managers to evaluate how the centre is operating. The manager provides written responses to these visits so an audit of the actions taken can be completed if necessary.

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
22	maintain an accurate and up-to-date record of sanctions used. (Regulation 17)	31 January 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.