

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Paul Gillespie
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Date of last inspection	20 October 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 children's home for six young people of either gender from 10 years to 17 years. The home cares for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and drug or alcohol dependence, from many parts of England and Wales.

It is a large detached house, four miles from the city centre. The location of the house enables young people to access facilities in the community easily. It is close to bus stops, a railway station, local schools, shops, youth groups, leisure centres and parks.

The home currently looks after six young people and four of them contributed to the inspection.

Summary

At this unannounced interim inspection the main focus was to find out how well the home meets the needs of young people living there under the staying safe outcome area. The inspection also looked at the progress that the home has made with the one action and eight recommendations made at the last inspection and this is reported under the relevant outcome areas. The outcome areas for being healthy and enjoying and achieving were not assessed and the previous judgements remain valid.

This continues to be a good service. Young people are happy and report they enjoy living there. They confirm that they are well looked after and get all the help they need from staff who are described as, 'very fair' and who 'listen to them'. They live in a secure and stable environment that enables them to make significant progress in all aspects of their lives, especially in relation to their social and emotional development. This has enabled young people to build positive relationships with adults based on trust and respect.

The areas for improvement include the overall standard of accommodation, ensuring that the staff records held at the home have all of the matters identified in regulation 29 and ensuring all young people's records, specifically placement plans and pathway plans are fully completed and up to date. The home can further promote the welfare of young people by ensuring the level of qualified staff stipulated in the standards is secured and that individual risk assessments better reflect the effectiveness of action taken to reduce identified risks. Additionally, young people's views about sanctions which would help staff assess the effectiveness of the measures they use, are still not recorded. Finally, although regulation 33 visits are now being undertaken the reports lack detail and evaluation.

Addressing these points will help ensure the focus continues to be on the promotion of welfare of young people and the quality of care in the home.

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 has taken appropriate action to resolve the one action and two of the eight recommendations identified at the last inspection. The Statement of Purpose has been amended to ensure that it is up to date and provides useful information. Additionally, young

people now have pathway plans in place and regulation 33 reports now reflect feedback from young people.

However, a number of recommendations remain and are restated. They include ensuring that the home is maintained in a good state of repair, that young people's placement plans and pathway plans are up to date and fully completed and the level of qualified staff meets the minimum standard. Young people's views about sanctions are still not recorded and the monitoring of records does not sufficiently follow up on areas of action that are identified for improvement but that are not addressed. For example, the lack of up to date placement plans.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people are well cared for. Safeguarding procedures and regular training ensure staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to keep young people safe. Staff have a good knowledge of young people's behaviour and this enables them to respond quickly and appropriately to any behavioural issues that arise. The support for young people is based on promoting positive behaviour in a nurturing environment. Their individual needs are well identified although individual risk assessments do not always include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the action identified to reduce risk to keep young people safe.

Young people's privacy and confidentiality is well respected. There are good bathroom facilities that promote privacy and young people have single bedrooms where they can spend time alone if they wish. Information about young people is managed confidentially and held securely in the office. This means that staff respect young people's privacy in a way that is consistent with good parenting and the need to protect young people. Young people also have independent access to a telephone without the necessity to ask the staff on duty.

Young people know how to complain. They say that they are confident that they 'can speak to the staff' if they feel the need and that staff listen to what they have to say. Young people have good access to information about the complaints procedure of both the home and the placing authority and feel that their concerns are always addressed by staff.

The staff at the home work hard to encourage young people to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Young people know what standards of behaviour are expected and this has resulted in young people demonstrating an increasingly mature and responsible approach to how they conduct themselves. Indeed young people spoke about how they feel they have 'grown up' since they had been at the home. This is supported by the fact that there has been no need for the use of restraint for a considerable time which reflects positively on the approach to managing behaviour and the relationships built between staff and young people. The use of sanctions are proportionate and young people commented that they understood the sanctions and viewed them as 'fair'. However, young people do not currently add their comments to records about any sanction issued.

At present young people are very settled and they confirm bullying is not a problem within the home. They state staff talk regularly with them about friendship and what a good relationship should be like. They also have support from external agencies to help them understand how

aspects of their behaviour may present a risk to their welfare. This means that young people develop an understanding and awareness of risk taking behaviour and its potential impact.

Young people are well protected by thorough staff recruitment practices that are designed to ensure all staff recruited to work with young people are suitable to do so. Additionally, there is a robust approach to the vetting and supervising of visitors which also helps ensure young people are kept safe. However, the details on regulation 29 records that do not fully capture all of the matters necessary.

Overall, health and safety is taken seriously. Staff carry out regular health and safety checks. These checks are supported by a comprehensive range of detailed health and safety procedures and risk assessments.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and how they should be meeting them on a daily basis. Young people spoke about how they are encouraged to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run for example, decisions about meal choices, what they do in their spare time and the plans for their future. However, not every young person has a comprehensive and up-to-date written placement plan identifying their needs and outlining the arrangements for meeting them.

The home has a welcoming atmosphere where everyone gets along well. Young people enjoy very positive relationships with staff based on warmth, honesty and respect. Staff view young people very positively and value them as individuals. They are helpful and enjoy spending time with young people. They have clear professional and personal boundaries with young people consistent with good childcare.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Staff work well with young people to identify their abilities and future needs in order to help their transition into adulthood. Young people who qualify now have pathway plans in place although in one case this needs updating. Young people are encouraged to be fully involved in making decisions about their future plans such as where they wish to live and whether they wish to continue in college or seek employment.

They report that they receive a lot of support and encouragement to develop the necessary life skills in preparation for moving on. In particular, young people spoke about how they are encouraged to routinely take part in the daily tasks of running the home, such as shopping, cooking, cleaning, ironing and handling money. This means they are able to develop a wide range of life skills to support them in the future. In addition, staff encourage them to develop their personal, organisational and social skills, such as personal hygiene, opening bank accounts, using public transport and getting themselves ready for school and college.

Young people like the accommodation and have personalised the home to reflect their interests and individual tastes. The accommodation is homely and of an adequate standard although attention is now required to improve the general standard of the décor and furnishings at the home.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The home has a clear written statement for parents and social workers of how the home operates. This has been updated as required and sets out the services it provides, and plans to meet young people's needs. This means young people know what support they can expect from the home and how they will be cared for.

Overall staff have good access to suitable training. The training programme covers the needs of young people and provides staff with the skills and knowledge to effectively do their jobs. However, although a number of staff have a recognised child care qualification, the home does not meet the level of qualified people expected by the standards.

The frequency of external and internal monitoring is in line with the requirements and there is improved evidence of young people's experiences being reflected in the regulation 33 reports. However, the regulation 33 reports do not currently include a specific check on the complaints log or follow up on areas previously identified for action that have not been addressed. Also, a greater level of analysis and evaluation would help drive forward and promote further improvement in the provision of care.

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 Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider must comply with the given timescales.

Standard	Action	Due date
27	ensure the details on regulation 29 records fully capture all of the matters necessary. (Reg 29(1) Schedule 4)	26 March 2010

Recommendations

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

- evaluate the effectiveness of the action identified to reduce risk in order to keep young people safe (NMS 26.3)
- provide young people with the opportunity to write or have their views recorded and to sign their names against the record kept by the home of sanctions issued (NMS 22.14)
- ensure each young person has a comprehensive placement plan of their assessed needs, the objectives of the placement and how their needs will be met on a day to day basis (NMS 2.1)

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- ensure that each young person's placement plan is monitored by a key worker who ensures that the plan is implemented and kept up to date (NMS 2.2)
 - ensure that pathway plans for eligible young people are up to date (NMS 6.3)
 - ensure that the home is maintained in a good state of structural and decorative repair (NMS 24.3)
 - improve the level of detail and evaluation in the regulation 33 reports in order to promote improvement in the provision of care (NMS 32)
 - ensure that at least 80% of all care staff have completed National Vocational Qualification in Caring for Children and Young People at Level 3. (NMS 29.5)