

Inspection report for children's home

Unique reference number	SC028868
Inspection date	4 March 2010
Inspector	Michael Williams
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	31 July 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 children's home is one of two run by a limited company. It is a traditional detached cottage located on a rural hillside in an area of woodland. It provides care and accommodation for a maximum of four boys with emotional or behavioural difficulties. At the time of this inspection, three boys were accommodated, aged 17 and 18 years old, who had all been in placement together a long time.

Summary

This was an announced interim inspection. It was announced a few hours beforehand so that a recent staff recruitment record could be brought to the home from the company's office. The focus of this inspection was to re-inspect the key national minimum standards for children's homes relating to the staying safe outcome for young people, and to follow up the two actions and one recommendation made following the home's key inspection in July 2009. The key finding from this inspection is that the home continues to be good at helping young people to stay safe. For example, young people have not recently made any complaints about their care, the dynamics between the young people accommodated are usually good, the home is focused on rewarding acceptable behaviour, so that there are relatively few instances when staff have to respond to inappropriate behaviour, and staff working in the home are carefully selected and vetted.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

The last inspection required the home to ensure that Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) procedures are followed when there is a concern about the well-being of a young person accommodated, and that all the information required is in young people's case records. It was also recommended that the home develop further the young people's preparation for leaving care. This inspection found that the home had implemented these actions and this recommendation.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

It was judged to be good at the previous inspection.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people's privacy is respected and their information is confidentially handled. Each young person has their own bedroom and their case records are securely stored and handled. The company has a confidentiality policy that new staff members are required to sign up to.

Young people know how to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the home. The home maintains a complaint record with the information required. No complaints have been recorded since the previous inspection.

An appropriate response can be made to any allegation or suspicion of abuse. The last inspection required the home to ensure that LSCB procedures are followed when there is a concern about the well-being of a young person accommodated. In response to this, the home reported that the LSCB will be notified of any such concern, of which there have been none since the last inspection. A recent company audit of mandatory staff training identified that several members of staff needed refresher training in safeguarding children that the home's acting manager was in the process of arranging.

Young people are protected from bullying. One young person and staff commented that the dynamics between the three young people at the home are now usually good, and much less challenging, now that one young person has left the home.

Young people who are absent from the home without consent are protected in line with the home's written policy and procedure. Case tracking showed that one young person's single unauthorised absence since the previous inspection was recorded as such in their case record, along with a completed missing person report form.

Young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour, through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff responses to inappropriate behaviour. The home continues to operate an individualised reward system with each young person, but is in the process of revising it, in part to reflect their increased age. At the time of this inspection, staff were undertaking behaviour management training. Since their previous inspection, the home has used restraint and sanctions with young people on several occasions. However, in some instances the records were hard to read, making it difficult to establish whether or not the use of restraints and sanctions was excessive or unreasonable. The records contained conflicting dates and did not always include the effectiveness and any consequences of the use of the measure.

Young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. The home continues to use an independent health and safety consultancy to ensure that they comply with health and safety at work requirements. Fire drills and tests of alarms and of fire equipment are monitored monthly by the home's manager, and random checks on health and safety matters form part of monthly external monitoring visits. Any necessary action identified from this monitoring is reported and taken.

Young people are safeguarded by the company's careful selection and vetting of all staff working with them in the home. Since the previous inspection, the company has recruited an acting manager to cover the temporary absence of the Registered Manager of the home. The recruitment record includes all the information required, and more. For example, there are more than two written references and verbal verification of their authenticity.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

It was judged to be outstanding at the previous inspection.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

It was judged to be good at the previous inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps to prepare them for and support them into adulthood. Given the age of the young people accommodated, the last inspection recommended that the home further develop their preparation for leaving care. This inspection found that the home was now placing much greater emphasis on promoting independence with their young people aged 17 and 18 years old. For example, through encouraging them to budget, to use public transport and to learn to drive, to self-medicate, and to organise overnight stays with their family and friends. This was being reflected in the young people's revised placement and pathway plans, and as a result one young person in particular was now much more mature.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Each young person has a permanent, private and secure record of their history and progress that contains the necessary information. The previous inspection required the home to ensure that all the necessary information is in young people's case records. In response to this, the home reported that they had undertaken an audit of young people's case records and included any missing information. Case tracking showed that since the last inspection, the home's use of restraint and sanctions is recorded both in the home's and the young person's records.

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
22	ensure that the written records of the use of restraint and sanctions in the home are legible, accurate and include all the information required. (breach of regulation 17 (4))	16 April 2010

Recommendations

There are no recommendations.