

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	31 July 2009
Inspector	Michael Williams
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	4 March 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, four boys were accommodated, who had all been in placement together since June 2008.

Summary

This inspection was announced two hours beforehand to ensure young people and staff would be present. This was a full inspection of all the key National Minimum Standards (NMS) for children's homes. The key findings from this inspection are that four of the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children, and the organisation outcome, are good. The remaining Enjoying and Achieving outcome, and the promotion of equality and diversity, within the organisation outcome, are outstanding. Therefore the overall quality rating is good. When asked what the home is good at doing, one young person said 'Keeping me safe', and when asked what they thought the home could do better, another young person said 'Nothing, good enough already.' One young person's social worker said the following about the home: 'Great home atmosphere. Young person is always happy, relaxed and has no complaints. He is enjoying his stay... A great place for him.'

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 did not require or recommend any improvements to be made.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people enjoy healthy, nutritious meals that meet their dietary needs and have opportunities to plan, shop for and prepare meals. All four young people commented positively about what the home does to encourage them to eat healthy meals and snacks and to help them with choosing, buying and cooking food. One young person's social worker commented that 'The provision of a healthy and varied diet as well as choice is always evident in placement.'

Young people live in a healthy environment and their good health is promoted by their health needs being identified and services being provided to meet them. All four young people commented positively about what the home does to look after them if they are feeling unwell, and that they are able to see a doctor or other health professional if necessary. One young person's social worker commented that they are 'appropriately challenged and discouraged with regard to the use of substances.' Services are secured to meet young people's emotional, as well as their physical, health needs. For example, child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) and the psychology service the home buys in. Young people's individual case files record all their medical appointments and include their placement plans with objectives for their health and health promotion.

Young people's health needs are met and their welfare is safeguarded by the home's policies and procedures for administering medicines and providing first aid treatment. Records for

young people's prescribed and non-prescribed medication are accurately maintained both in the home and in young people's individual case files. The amount of medication securely stored in the home tallied with that recorded. The registered manager had recently carried out their monthly medication audit. The registered manager and team leader are qualified first aiders, and staff first aid refresher training is scheduled for the forthcoming year.

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 own key to its door, and their individual case files are securely stored and handled. The home has a new meeting room where young people's information can be discussed confidentially.

Young people know how and feel able to complain if they are unhappy with any aspect of living in the home. Any complaint is addressed seriously and without delay. Since the home's last inspection, one complaint has been recorded: it contains all the information required, including that the complainant was satisfied with the outcome. The complaints procedure is in the home's statement of purpose and accompanying young people's guide, and it includes Ofsted's contact details.

There are systems in place to promote young people's safety and welfare and to ensure that they are protected from abuse. Child protection training has been undertaken by staff in the last year and refresher training is scheduled for the forthcoming year. Since the last inspection, a concerning incident with a young person was notified to their social worker and their manager, who made a CAMHS referral. However, the home neither sought local Safeguarding Children Service advice nor made a child protection referral regarding it.

Young people are protected from bullying. In their surveys for this inspection, two young people answered 'no' and two 'yes' to the question 'Have you ever been bullied by other young people in the home or seen others being bullied?' In response to the further question how does the home deal with bullying, one young person said 'staff talked to the bullies'. With the four young people having lived together at the home for a long time, bullying between them is not currently a problem, but occasionally the dynamics between some of them are challenging, and the home deals with these instances fairly and effectively.

Young people who are absent from the home without consent are protected in line with the home's written policy and guidance. The home has a protocol in place with the police for dealing with young people going missing and records such instances in young people's case files. The month before this inspection, the home participated in a strategy meeting regarding two of their young people who had frequently been reported missing. This resulted in a care plan being drawn up with the placing authority for the young person who was most frequently being reported missing, since when this has not recurred.

Through encouragement of acceptable behaviour and constructive staff response to inappropriate behaviour, young people are assisted to develop socially acceptable behaviour. Out of the four young people's surveys for this inspection, one answered 'yes', one 'so so' and two 'no' to the question 'Do you think that the rules where you live are fair?' Three wrote 'sanctioned' and one 'grounded' in response to the further question about what happens if you do not follow the rules. Near the time of the last inspection, the registered manager met

with both the staff team and the young people to encourage more positive behaviour from the young people. To this end, the home now consistently operates a revised reward system for each young person. Following their monitoring for the month of this inspection, the registered manager reported 'No restraints and three sanctions since last check was made, a huge improvement.' A summary the inspector agreed with.

Young people live in a home that provides physical safety and security. The home maintains a fire logbook and a record of fire drills. The former records routine internal checks and external servicing of fire prevention equipment. The service uses an independent health and safety consultancy to ensure that they comply with health and safety at work requirements. They provide the home with a risk assessment manual, and the home has carried out numerous risk assessments accordingly.

There is careful selection and vetting of all staff working with young people in the home. The recruitment record of a residential support worker (RSW) appointed since the last inspection included all the information required, and more such as telephone verification of written references received.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive excellent individual support when they need it. They receive individual support from within the home, for example from their key workers, from the psychology service the home buys in, and from external professionals, such as Connexions, Youth Offending and CAMHS workers. Following one young person's unwillingness to engage with their key worker, they were allocated a new key worker who they have been meeting with.

Young people's education is actively promoted as valuable in itself and as part of their preparation for adulthood. Since the last inspection, the young people are cooperating much more with education or training programmes put in place for them. Their cooperation has been effectively encouraged by the home's revised reward system. This inspection was carried out during the school summer holiday, when one young person was attending employment training, another was doing work experience, and the other two were planning to attend college. One placing social worker said that 'There is a pro-active approach to the young person's education and finding him work experience.' During school time, the home employs a home tutor for young people on days when they are not engaged in education or training outside of the home.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people are appropriately placed in the home. They have their needs assessed effectively and comprehensively and written placement plans outlining how their needs will be met are implemented. Each young person has a file comprehensively covering each major element of their placement plan. Young people's needs and development are reviewed regularly in the light of their care and progress at the home.

Young people are able to maintain constructive contact with their families, friends and other people who play a significant role in their lives. Contact arrangements are clearly recorded and included in placement plans and reviews. During this inspection, the home facilitated one young

person's family contact and after making their expectations clear agreed to another young person's friend visiting the home.

Young people are able to move into and leave the home in a planned and sensitive manner. All four young people have been accommodated at the home since June 2008 and are now aged between 16 and 17 years old. Their preparation for leaving the home is reported below.

Young people are encouraged and supported to make decisions about their lives and to influence the way the home is run. All four young people answered 'yes' to the inspection survey question 'Do you feel that you are able to make your views known and that you are able to have a say in what happens in the home?' Two house meetings have taken place since the last inspection; consultation also takes place in key working sessions and in preparation for young people's reviews.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Young people receive care which helps to prepare them for and support them into adulthood. Three young people have pathway plans that the home is following. A placing social worker commented that their young person is 'helped in managing finances', but in response to the question 'What does the home do to prepare you for independence?' another young person replied 'Not a lot.' Given the age of the young people accommodated, preparation for leaving care is not as developed as it could be at the home.

Young people enjoy homely accommodation, decorated, furnished and maintained to a high standard, providing adequate facilities for their use. The accommodation at the home has been drastically improved with the extension and the refurbishment that took place at the end of 2008. The extension has provided a meeting room for young people's education and reviews at the home. The company employs a maintenance officer who is also a relief RSW; they were present during this inspection carrying out the company's new repairs system. The home is in the process of providing each young person with a mobile phone with a certain amount of talk time each month, as an alternative to having a young person's pay phone.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

A clear statement of how the home operates is available for parents and others needing this information. The home's statement of purpose and accompanying young people's information booklet were last updated the month of this inspection. The former includes all the matters required.

Young people receive the care and services they need from competent staff. The registered manager has completed National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) at level 4 in care and leadership and management. The team leader, all RSWs bar the one recently appointed, and some of the relief RSWs have completed the NVQ at Level 3 in caring for children and young people.

Staff are sufficient in number, experience and qualification to meet the needs of the young people. The staff team is made up of the registered manager, a team leader, residential support

workers (RSWs) and relief RSWs. The rota includes mid-shifts during school holidays to cover young people's activities.

Young people are looked after by staff who are trained and competent to meet their needs. For example, the newly appointed RSW had already undertaken company training in solution focused therapy, managing challenging behaviour and fire safety.

The care of young people accommodated is monitored and continually adapted in the light of information about how the home is operating. The registered manager completes monthly reports covering most of the matters required to be monitored by them. They monitor the other matters required in other ways, such as by signing the home's records relating to them. The home also has reports from monthly external monitoring visits.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. In their self-assessment for this inspection, the registered manager gave some examples of what the home does to ensure that equality and diversity are promoted and incorporated into their practice. Each young person's placement plan has a section for their 'Cultural / Religious / Language / Racial Needs'. The psychology service employed by the company runs a weekly social skills group that young people from the home have joined in with a view to promoting their participation in wider society.

Young people's needs, development and progress are recorded to reflect their individuality. Each young person has an open case, case management, education, and placement plan file. Together these files are designed to include all the information required to be in young people's case records. However, case tracking showed that since the last inspection two instances of restraint recorded in the home had not been transferred to one young person's case files. Young people are made aware of what information in their files they can read.

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
17	ensure local Safeguarding Children Board child protection procedures are followed when there is a concern about the well being of a young person accommodated (Regulation 16)	31 August 2009
35	ensure all the information required is included in the case records of young people accommodated (Regulation 28)	31 August 2009

Recommendations

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

- develop further the young people's preparation for leaving care (Key NMS 6)