

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Merryl Wahogo
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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 outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004 and the relevant National Minimum Standards for the service.

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 local authority children's home that provides care and accommodation for six children and young people of either gender. The home aims to provide a period of stability for children and young people with complex needs in an environment with a therapeutic emphasis. In addition, there is multi-agency involvement in addressing their needs. Children and young people stay at the home for periods in excess of six months. They are helped to return to their families, move to substitute family placements or to more independent placements. The home is located in a rural setting with local facilities in close proximity.

Summary

The overall quality rating is good.

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

This was the unannounced interim inspection. It covers the staying safe outcome and a number of actions and recommendations made at the previous inspection. Changes in the decision-making process in relation to admissions to the home, have resulted in vast improvements. There is now a group of suitably-placed young people, making the home much calmer. This renders some of the previous actions and recommendations currently inapplicable. In light of this it is only possible to make judgements on the basis of current outcomes for young people, which are good. Some actions and recommendations will need to be assessed in the future, as and when the relevant situations require it.

The action to improve the premises is repeated because the local authority have not yet made the relevant decisions as is the recommendation regarding the approval of the Statement of Purpose. The recommendation regarding the electrical installations is repeated pending some clarification regarding definitions.

Improvements since the last inspection

The local authority was asked to ensure that the manager is an equal partner in the decision-making process for all admissions to the home bearing in mind the needs and behaviour of those already resident. As a result, the local authority put in place an action plan that has resulted in a massive improvement to the appropriateness of placements. In its turn, this has meant that there are markedly fewer behavioural problems. Young people now appear happy and are able to maintain reasonable relationships with each other and staff.

For the reasons above, it is not possible to be sure that some actions and recommendations are now being met and these will need assessing as the situations arise. These will now be assessed at the next inspection.

The manager was also asked to ensure that, when young people are admitted to the home, they come with all necessary documentation. While there have been few admissions since the last inspection, there is now a stronger emphasis on achieving this. As a result, young people benefit from staff with a clearer focus on their needs.

The manager was also asked to ensure that she promotes the education of the young people. In the light of this, she has refused placements that would have jeopardised young people's education. She is also working closely with the education department to ensure young people in the home have suitable educational opportunities. Although young people do not always choose to take advantage of the opportunities that are made available, they are encouraged to take their lives forward through education.

The local authority and manager were asked to improve and maintain the premises. The action plan from the local authority stated a goal of starting work by the beginning of April and keeping Ofsted informed, but no plans have been received. The manager has provided some new soft furnishings in the lounge and bedrooms where requested. The young people appreciate this. It has, however, done little to reduce the institutional décor as a whole, which means young people are unlikely to feel completely relaxed and at home.

The manager was asked to review the Statement of Purpose and has done this, but cannot yet evidence formal approval by the elected members of the local authority. She was also asked to ensure that staff receive supervision at the required frequency and this is now in place. Neither of these have a direct impact on the young people, but clarity about the purpose of the home and focus for staff do improve outcomes for young people.

It was recommended that electrical installations be checked at least every three years. This has not yet happened in relation to the wiring in the home, although the manager has been looking into it.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The manager has made strenuous efforts to ensure that she has all the necessary details in place to compile appropriate health plans for young people. They currently have few health needs, but those few are being met.

A senior member of staff has drafted a new policy and procedure for treatment and for the administration of medication. It does not, however, contain all the details listed in the action plan presented to Ofsted and has not been signed and dated. Nevertheless, staff work hard to support the young people to stay healthy and active.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff adhere to policies and procedures which ensure young people enjoy the maximum privacy. This includes those times when room searches are necessary.

Not only have there been no complaints since the last inspection, but staff received a compliment from a police officer, because of the high standard of their cooperation. There have not been any child protection concerns recently either. Staff and young people confirm that there is a strict filter on computers, which limits access to websites. Staff are also good at helping young people learn about safe sex and safe behaviour when out of the home. They keep a detailed visitors book and ensure all visitors sign in and learn about fire exits.

There has been no bullying recently and, although young people are occasionally absent without authority, staff respond according to policies and procedures. There have been no notifiable events since the last inspection.

Behaviour management is based on a combination of a restorative approach and one particular method in which all staff are trained. Staff are thoughtful about sanctions and do well to make them appropriate as well as effective, with reductions in pocket money being the most common sanction. On the other hand, there is an incentive scheme based on being able to earn a little more. There has been no need for restraints since the last inspection and all sanctions are clearly and thoroughly recorded.

Staff keep all aspects of fire safety up to date, including having a fire drill whenever a new young person or member of staff joins the home. They also record and store accident reports entirely appropriately. There is still no evidence of a check to establish the safety of the wiring system in line with the frequency required by standards. This means that there is a small risk of fire. Young people are, therefore, living in a mostly safe environment, but without certainty that the wiring is safe.

This is a stable staff group and there has been no new recruitment for the last 18 months.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Staff are paying good attention to ensuring the best possible quality of education for the young people in the home. This includes communicating and cooperating well with schools and colleges. It is backed by improved procedures that the local authority has put in place during meetings to discuss placements.

Other standards in this outcome area remain good.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The manager is now fully involved in placement decisions. Nevertheless, she still finds it difficult, on occasion, to obtain full documentation from social services in a timely fashion. She has only achieved enough documentation for a detailed care plan after rather strenuous efforts.

Other standards in this outcome area remain good.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The manager has had the paving slabs outside cleaned and has created new planting areas. She has also bought some new furniture. The local authority, however, has not yet refurbished the premises and the small improvements in relation to soft furnishings, have failed to make this service homely.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The manager has reviewed and revised the Statement of Purpose and has sent it off to the local authority for approval. As a result of the more settled behaviour of the young people, the manager and senior staff have been able to revert to regular supervision.

Other standards in this outcome area remain good.

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/s meets the Care Standards Act 2000, Children's Homes Regulations 2001 and the National Minimum Standards. The Registered Provider(s) must comply with the given timescales.

Std.	Action	Due date
24	improve and maintain the premises so as to provide suitable accommodation for young people (Children's Homes Regulations 2001 (31)(1)(2))	31/03/2011

Recommendations

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

- undertake checks of electrical installations at least every three years (NMS 26.4)
- evidence formal approval of the Statement of Purpose, by the elected members of the local authority. (NMS 1.5)