

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
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Date of last inspection	18 February 2010
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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 home provides medium to long-term care to young people of primary school age on admission. It specialises in working with children and young people who are deemed to suffer from an attachment disorder or difficulty. All admissions are planned.

The home is located in a residential area and has a domestic appearance. It provides a child-friendly environment with space for young people to follow their individual interests. It contains all the fixtures, equipment and furnishings expected in a domestic dwelling.

There is an expectation that young people are educated in school, not in the home, and all young people are in full-time education at a community based school. Full advantage is taken of community based leisure activities and pursuits.

As well as providing residential provision, the home provides individual therapeutic programmes. All such activity takes place away from the home environment. It remains the responsibility of placing authorities who purchase a therapeutic package for a young person to ensure it is appropriate to meet their individual needs.

Summary

At this unannounced, full inspection all the key standards were inspected.

The organisation, management and monitoring of the home is good. The manager and staff team work together collectively to promote the welfare of the young people in their care. Currently the home is experiencing difficulties with some very young children, with deep rooted problems, exhibiting some challenging and destructive behaviours.

The individual needs of young people are identified and appropriate plans, strategies and risk assessments are in place to meet those needs. Staffing levels are good and staff are well motivated and fully committed to help young people through their difficulties and current insecurities. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected.

Young people feel safe living at the home and say it is a good place to live. Indeed, one young person states that it is a very, very good place to live. Despite the challenges and impulsive, damaging behaviours, young people are settled in their placements. They speak warmly about staff and raised no concerns, issues or complaints about the way they are being looked after.

One action has been made as a result of this inspection linked to creating improved access for young people through external doors. Two recommendations have also been made regarding the home being more pro-active with placing authorities who fail to arrange statutory reviews within the required timescale and to ensure that all areas of the home are decorated and furnished to the same standard.

While the overall quality rating of the home remains as good, progress has been made in the area of enjoying and achieving which has been raised from good to outstanding.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Following the previous inspection, no actions or recommendations have been carried forward.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

The arrangements to promote the health needs of young people are good. The home has established and maintains good links with local doctors, dentist and optician, with young people receiving regular treatment. There are also good links established with other specialist medical providers such as the local nurse with responsibilities for looked after children.

Each young person has a comprehensive health plan in place, which is updated as required. A new, more detailed format for health plans has been introduced since the previous key inspection. Staff look to arrange annual health assessments for young people within the required timescale and will negotiate strongly with placing authorities who may be slow to react positively to their initial request.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to store and administer prescribed and non prescribed medication. This is underpinned with comprehensive systems to record the administering of any medication given. All but the newest staff member have received training in first aid, medication and food hygiene.

Young people have no concerns about the choice, quality or quantity of food served. Individual choices appear on the menu and young people are heavily involved in assisting staff with the shopping. Menus are varied, providing a nutritional, balanced diet that reflects a good mix of traditional foods alongside dishes from different cultures.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Privacy is not an issue of concern to young people. Each have their own bedroom, with many fitted with privacy locks. The home is spacious and has areas where young people can find some peace and quiet if they wish. All sensitive information is held securely in one of two staff areas.

Young people understand how to access the complaints procedures, which have been tested successfully recently. Information about complaints is available in the young person's guide and displayed around the home along with the contact details of independent, external agencies. Young people confirm that staff speak to them about complaints. Appropriate records of all complaints received are kept along with details of the outcome.

The safety and rights of young people are protected. Good links have been established with external agencies charged with safeguarding responsibilities. Staff understand their own responsibilities and required actions when dealing with such issues. All staff have received training in safeguarding matters and are aware of the home's own policy and procedures.

Currently the home is accommodating a group of young people who are all of primary school age, with two who are quite young. Their behaviour at times is impulsive and squabbles can occur. A high staffing ratio, coupled with good deployment, ensures that opportunities for bullying are minimised. Information about bullying is displayed around the home and young

people confirm that staff are quick to react should a bullying situation occur. None of the young people feel that bullying is a problem and they have no issues or concerns regarding this matter.

Because of the age and previous experiences of young people, impulsive, challenging and destructive behaviour frequently breaks out. This is well managed by staff who are experienced, sufficient in numbers and confident to handle any flashpoint quickly and calmly. Resorting to immediate punitive action following an incident of disruptive behaviour is not part of the ethos, culture and working practices developed by the home. Problems are worked through positively and wherever possible, constructively. This is reflected in the fact there have been no young people missing from the home and in the low number of sanctions imposed.

The young people themselves feel the home is a safe place to live. They raise no concerns or complaints about any aspects of behaviour management and feel that staff are fair. They speak warmly about staff and the relationships between young people and staff were observed as excellent.

General health and safety issues are addressed with a range of risk assessments identifying hazards both in and outside the home. In addition, comprehensive risk assessments are completed for each young person. Appropriate service contracts for fire, gas and electrical equipment are in place. However, free access for young people through external doors can at times be limited.

All staff receive appropriate checks and clearances before they commence their duties. A system to recheck longer serving staff every three years is in place. Recruitment procedures meet with current requirements and recognised good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The individual support provided to young people is outstanding. The group consists of young people with diverse needs and requiring different levels of support. Recognition of need, underpinned with documentation that lays out agreed plans and strategies, allows for the correct levels of support to be implemented. Key workers also take a high profile in determining and providing excellent levels of support to young people. Due to age and capabilities, young people are highly dependent on staff, yet recognise the support they receive from them.

All young people are in full-time education, attending a community based school. For some, this is a significant achievement and is their first experience of regular, full-time formal education. Appropriate plans for education along with other relevant documentation is held on young people's files. Young people speak positively about school and are happy with the arrangements for their education.

Young people's circumstances, needs, interests and choices drive the range of leisure pursuits and activities taking place. Each one has the opportunity to experience community based activities regularly, that are individual to themselves. For example, cubs, horse riding, karate and guides. Staffing levels allow for a range of mixed activities to take place simultaneously to meet demand and need. Young people speak positively about the range of activities they are involved with.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Placement plans consist of a range of documentation that identifies the needs of the young people, along with plans and strategies designed to meet those needs. Plans are updated to take account of the changing needs and development of young people. Plans include their cultural and religious needs which are being addressed positively in practice.

The statutory reviews for three young people are taking place within the required timescale. However, the timescale for one young person has been exceeded, despite some prompting from the home to the responsible placing authority. Young people have an age appropriate understanding of the reviewing process and their own plans for the future.

The contact arrangements for young people are complex and for some limiting. Specific details along with records of all contact maintained form part of the planning documentation. The home has made arrangements for an independent advocate to visit young people on a regular basis. This is taking place monthly.

The admission and discharge procedures are understood by staff, with all admissions being planned. Young people recently admitted speak positively about their experience at that time and the support they received from staff.

Young people are given opportunities to make choices about certain aspects of their lives and confirm they have good opportunities for consultation. For example, most young people identify the young people's meetings and key worker sessions as areas where consultation takes place. Good levels of communication allow for consultation to be an ongoing process, which is aided with the excellent relationships that exist between young people and staff.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

None of the young people are of an age where they are being prepared to leave care, or move on from the home in the immediate future.

The home is designed to provide a warm, inviting, domestic and child friendly environment. Unfortunately, due to the current, continuous damage being caused by young people, some areas of the home fall below the high standards reported on in previous inspections. Staff work hard to minimise damage and take appropriate steps to report it as well as initiating repair. The current aim is to get all areas of the home to the same high standards that have been achieved in the past.

Young people like the home and are comfortable in their surroundings. The home reflects the ages of the young people accommodated with lots of toys, games, posters and examples of their art work displayed. Bedrooms are furnished and personalised to reflect the interests and taste of the occupant.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

Both the Statement of Purpose and guide for young people, meet with regulatory requirement. They are reviewed and updated regularly. Young people confirm they have received their own personalised copy of the young person's guide.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. The individual needs of young people are being addressed positively. Young people show a genuine interest in the themed evenings that have taken place recently, such as the Egyptian evening that took place prior to the inspection commencing. A staff member has just taken on the role as the home's equality and diversity champion, with a remit to promote and develop equality and diversity issues within the home's operation.

The staff group is well motivated and committed to working with young people positively and are prepared to work flexibly to meet the needs of the young people in their care. They are well supported by the manager with supervision, appraisals and team meetings taking place regularly.

The experience, numbers and deployment of staff, allows them to address the needs and demands of young people, positively. They feel they are given good access to training and all apart from one, has either completed or is undertaking relevant National Vocational training.

The home is well organised and managed. All administrative areas are up to date and comply with the requirements of regulations and standards. Pushing this area towards greater improvement is on hold, due to the high demands being made on staff in looking after the current group of young people. Understandably, meeting the practical and emotional needs of young people is being given priority.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home takes place consistently, within the required timescale. Reports produced monthly are comprehensive and contain strong elements of quality assurance. External monitoring reports contain a section aimed specifically at young people informing them of the outcome of the monitoring visit. This is viewed as good practice.

Young people's files are structured, neat and generally up to date. They reflect the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

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
26	ensure appropriate locks are fitted to external doors to allow for emergency exit at all times and to avoid the potential for restricting the liberty of a young person. (Regulation 32.1(b))	20 September 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that all reasonable steps are taken for statutory reviews to be arranged and conducted within the required timescale (NMS 3.3)
- ensure all areas of the home are decorated and furnished to the same standard. (NMS 24.2)