

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10 August 2009
Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	13 February 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

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. Good links exist with local schools. 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 full inspection all the key standards were inspected. The outstanding actions from the previous inspection were also followed up. The initial visit took place unannounced on the 10 August 2009 with a further visit to conclude the inspection taking place on the 12 August 2009.

The home currently accommodates a group of four young people who are all aged under 12 years old. It provides a structured environment with clear boundaries in place. The individual needs of young people are recognised and there are specific plans and strategies in place to address those needs.

An experienced manager organises and manages the home well. The staff group, whilst experiencing some recent changes, provides structure, stability and a safe environment for the young people in their care. The promotion of equality and diversity is good throughout the standards inspected.

No major issues or concerns were raised by either staff or young people. As a result of this inspection, the report contains no actions, but two good practice recommendations have been made. The overall quality rating of the home has moved from satisfactory to good.

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, two actions were made and both have been fully addressed. This has led to improved accessibility of positive handling plans for staff which aids consistency and with young people's case records being kept up to date.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Young people help with planning menus and on occasions with shopping and food preparation. None have any concerns regarding the choice, quality and quantity of food served. Any special dietary needs are catered for and menus are nutritional. Meals are taken in the dining area and organised as social occasions. Basic food hygiene training that took place for five staff last month included some young people.

The health needs of young people are being promoted positively. Regular visits to a range of local general health practitioners take place, along with more specialised health care if necessary. Up to date health plans are completed for each young person, with visits to health professionals being recorded appropriately. Annual health assessments are taking place within the required timescale. Staff receive appropriate training through induction and the core training programme. Whilst most staff have completed recent first aid training, the majority have yet to complete medication awareness training.

Medication is stored securely and records of any prescribed and non-prescribed medication administered are up to date and properly kept.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Young people have no concerns regarding issues of privacy. Each has free access to their own bedroom and the home is spacious enough to allow them to find some space of their own if they wish. Any sensitive and confidential information is stored securely.

The home's complaints system is understood by young people and has been tested successfully on occasions. They are provided with written information about accessing the system, as well as having the contact details for a number of external agencies and helplines. All complaints, along with the outcome, are recorded appropriately.

The safety and rights of staff and young people are protected. The home has both its own and the local authority's safeguarding procedures in place. They are implemented by an immediate referral to appropriate safeguarding agencies when any issue arises. Most staff have received safeguarding training which forms part of the ongoing core staff training programme.

Young people confirm that bullying is not tolerated and that staff act quickly to intervene should a situation arise. Good staffing levels and deployment of staff go some way to minimising the opportunities for bullying to take place. Information about young people's rights and bullying issues appears in the young person's guide, with additional information displayed around the home. Bullying is not a major issue of concern to young people.

Appropriate practical systems, underpinned by policy and procedures, are in place to deal with unauthorised absence. However, since the previous inspection there have been no incidents.

Since the last inspection the home experienced a difficult and unsettled period with some young people working through times and issues that were for them difficult. Currently a more settled period is being experienced.

Sanctions are known as consequences, with both positives recorded alongside negatives. The current settled period is reflected in the high number of positive consequences recorded from

July onwards as opposed to negative ones. Young people feel that staff are fair and that strategies designed to reduce negative consequences are working.

Incidents of physical intervention are recorded thoroughly, with evidence of regular oversight by both internal and external management. Most staff have received training in positive handling techniques, with dates for further training identified. Young people raised no issues or concerns and feel the home is a safe place to live.

General health and safety issues are addressed by a range of risk assessments covering general hazards both around and away from the home. In addition, individual risk assessments are completed for each young person. Appropriate service contracts are in place for fire, gas and electrical equipment.

The systems for recruiting and clearing staff meet with regulatory requirement, with evidence to show this being retained on site.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

The individual support provided to young people is good. This is evidenced in the variety of planning documentation and key worker records. Young people speak well of staff and have a good understanding of the supportive role of their key workers. Good examples of individual support were noted during the inspection.

All young people have suitable educational arrangements in place for the forthcoming school term, when they will attend community based schools. Educational plans and arrangements are reflected in young people's planning documentation. Education is promoted positively by staff with routines in place to encourage attendance and the completion of homework.

Young people enjoy a range of group and individual activities designed to meet their individual interests, abilities and needs. Plans are in place for the summer holidays with a range of community based activities and holidays planned.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

Young people's individual, religious and cultural needs are identified in the range of documentation that makes up the placement plan. Identified needs are supported with plans and strategies designed to meet those needs, which are underpinned with individual risk assessments. All planning documentation is reviewed and updated regularly. Young people are familiar with their own plans, which they sign.

Statutory reviews and planning meetings usually take place within the required timescale. The manager monitors dates and is quick to contact placing authorities should they exceed the timescale. Young people confirm they are encouraged to attend their review and that staff are supportive. The records of the last review form part of a young person's placement plan.

Contact arrangements are clearly laid out in placement plans, with records of all contact kept. Young people understand their own arrangements, some of which are restricted for reasons of protection. In addition to the individual arrangements in place, an independent advocate visits the home on a monthly basis to meet with all young people.

Admissions to the home are planned, with tried and tested procedures in place. Young people speak positively about their own admission experience, confirming they were given help and support from staff and made familiar with rules and routines.

Young people are happy to be with staff and consultation was observed as an ongoing process. Formal systems, such as young people's meetings, take place regularly. Young people are satisfied with the levels of consultation and feel they are able to make choices about certain aspects of the home's operation. The relationships between young people and staff were observed as good.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The young people accommodated are of an age where preparation for leaving care is not applicable.

The home is spacious with a good standard of repair, décor, fixtures, fittings, furnishings and equipment. It provides a warm, domestic, child-friendly environment where young people can relax. Their bedrooms are decorated, furnished and personalised in a style to suit the occupant and each one has a range of personal possessions, such as books, games and toys. Young people were observed as being comfortable and at ease in their environment.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

The statement of purpose, recently revised and updated, provides an accurate insight into the organisation and function of the home. A copy of the young people's guide is provided around the time of admission. It covers all the expected areas and is produced in a format conducive to the young people accommodated. Both meet with regulatory requirement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is good. This is reflected in the displays around the home. For example, recently staff and young people have put together a number of collages reflecting areas that link directly into equality and diversity themes. Equality and diversity now form part of the ongoing core staff training programme, with recent training being completed.

A programme of formal staff supervision is in place and ongoing, with sessions taking place consistently, within the recommended timescale. Staff appraisals are also being completed.

Within the last year there has been some turnover of staff, with a number moving into more senior positions within the company. These staff have been replaced, resulting in the number of staff with an appropriate National Vocational Qualification (NVQ), falling below minimum requirements.

Not all staff recently taking up posts are inexperienced. The numbers and collective experience of the staff group allow for the operation and functioning of the home to meet the aims laid out in the statement of purpose, with good standards of care being provided.

Staff confirm they have good access to training and are actively encouraged to attend appropriate training courses. A number are about to either embark on or are currently undertaking relevant NVQ training as well as attending courses provided by the company's core staff training programme.

Duty rotas are planned in advance and there are suitable arrangements to deputise and cover leave and sickness. The general organisation and management of the home is good and staff feel well supported. Both the external and internal monitoring of the home is taking place consistently, within the required timescale. Reports from monitoring visits contain elements of quality assurance.

The case files of all four young people are up to date and properly kept.

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
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Recommendations

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

- ensure all staff receive updated medication awareness training (NMS 13.1)
- aim towards achieving a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff completing their level 3 NVQ training (NMS 29.5).