

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Stephen Trainor
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	18 August 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 operated by a local authority and is registered to care for up to six children and young people of both genders, from the age of 13 years up to 17 years old. At the time of the inspection, six young people were living at the home. It was possible to speak to one about the quality of care being received.

The home cares for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Services have recently been developed to support young people in need, who are registered as refugees. The house is detached and situated a few miles from a large town centre. There are sufficient rooms, where the young people can pursue their leisure interests and hobbies. All bedrooms are single occupancy. The home was completely refurbished and extended in October 2007. Some of the large garden at the rear of the home was used for a bedroom extension and a conservatory.

The children and young people can gain access to parks, the cinema and sports and athletics facilities. Bus routes connect the home with the local community, places of worship and the national rail link. Shops and supermarkets are accessible within the surrounding community.

Summary

This interim, unannounced inspection comments on the three outcome areas, being healthy, staying safe and organisation. Progress against recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

The young people are experiencing stable placements. They are being looked after in a safe environment and they understand the full reasons why they are living there. There is good commitment from the young people towards their individual placement arrangements. The quality of practice enables young people to develop their self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence.

There are few behaviour management problems. No concerns relating to bullying, physical intervention and sanctions are identified. The management team work closely with local police when young people go missing. A protocol is firmly established. Concerns are recorded and significant events are notified to relevant professionals and agencies. Good safeguarding support is coordinated.

The home is managed safely by a competent Registered Manager. A good percentage of the staff team hold relevant qualifications. Management support is coordinated well and staff gain access to ongoing training. The staff team is effective and this ensures good continuity with practice on a daily basis.

The accommodation is safe and there are good resources. Caring and trusted relationships have been forged between staff and the young people. There is good monitoring of the home's operation by local authority managers. Quality assurance systems show that the management team reflect on practice and develop services in line with new initiatives. The health of the young people is managed well.

This report highlights some recommendations to support practice developments. The process for staff personal development and appraisal remains a little disjointed. The minimum ratio of

80% of all staff completing their National Vocational Qualification training at level 3 is not met yet. More equality and diversity training is needed for staff to improve their knowledge, skills and awareness in this extremely important area. Not all personnel files are maintained in the same format and this can lead to difficulties locating information.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or are in the process of being addressed in the case of improving the clarity of management records and more staff completing their national vocational studies.

Training programmes have been completed in safe handling of medicines. Staff practice is consistent when administering medicines. Information on staff induction and supervision is improved and greater attention is being taken to ensure personnel files contain all relevant information.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is good.

Not all key standards were judged under this section, so the good judgment, remains the same as at the last inspection. An incident relating to the mismanagement of medicines was reported to Ofsted between inspections. The home's management team provide training in first aid and safe handling of medicines for each staff member. This should mean safer medicines management.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Arrangements for complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and this ensures that young people feel listened to and protected. No major concerns were highlighted throughout the course of this inspection. Findings are consistent with other inspections.

Staff receive suitable safeguarding training in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. Young people's welfare is clearly being supported. Policy and procedural guidance has been established that is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. Contact has been established with the Local Authority Designated Officer. Good standards of safeguarding practice continue to be demonstrated. A safeguarding discussion was quickly arranged in response to a concern that coincided with this inspection. Consultation occurs frequently with everyone supporting placements. Good records are made on the discussions that take place. Records show satisfaction with how services are being operated.

Safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people within a guide. The contents of this information is known and young people acknowledge that they suffer no recrimination if complaints and grumbles are made. Young people learn to differentiate their behaviour according to the different settings and situations they find themselves in. There is effective use of positive reinforcement opposed to the use of sanctions. Residents respond very well to praise. There have been no incidents between inspections requiring physical

intervention. Staff with key worker responsibilities uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to achieve and develop. Support being provided ensures that the young people can make choices about how to lead safe lives.

Staff have good skills to support young people. They are experiencing stable placements. Suitable physical safety and security is afforded for the young people resident at the home. The young people are happy and settled. The social presentation of the young people is good. The residents have an appreciation of and respect for their peers and the staff members. Working relationships are good.

Missing from home reporting is in line with a locally established police protocol. This protocol had been reviewed recently. The young people are given the opportunity to reflect on incidents they are involved in and many choose to write down their comments. This allows potential safeguarding matters to be identified. The safety of each of the young people is given paramount consideration. Suitable risk assessments support decision making.

Reporting systems and actions taken in response to significant events are appropriate. Reporting is in line with regulations and the relevant people are being informed of significant events. The Ofsted protocol for reporting significant incidents is known. Incident reports contain suitable details. It is clear what actions are being taken to safeguard residents and prevent similar occurrences.

Premises health and safety is being managed well. Certification is held centrally to show servicing and maintenance of the electrical and gas installations and there is regular portable appliance testing. The premises has a modern fire precautions system and the premises fire risk assessment is being reviewed annually. Practice fire drills are carried out. Risk assessments are being maintained.

Personnel files are held within the home. These have been reviewed between inspections and are now starting to show evidence that a robust recruitment procedure is being followed. Not all personnel files are maintained in the same format. This work in progress should be finalised soon. There were no new appointments between inspections. Past inspections have confirmed that no staff start work ahead of being in receipt of an enhanced criminal records bureau check. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is not judged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is not judged.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Service history shows operation and management of the home remains to a good standard. Practice meets with the requirements of children's homes national minimum standards and

associated regulations. No breaches of regulations were identified at this inspection. The needs of the young people are being supported well by a motivated team of staff.

Deployment of staff is good. The staffing structure has not experienced any changes between inspections. Staff retention is excellent. Staff are clear about their roles and this allows them to balance their work so that the individual and collective needs of the young people can be met while ensuring the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken. Rotas demonstrate that agreed staffing levels are being maintained.

Some management records lack a little bit of clarity. The systems used for staff personal development and the annual appraisal are under review. The Registered Manager is committed to completing staff appraisals in line with children's home's standards. Induction and foundation training is provided and the areas being covered are captured within a new recording format. Records show that mandatory training is being planned ahead of staff working their first shift. Supervision frequency continues to be improved.

A good staff training attended record is being maintained. There is access to National Vocational Qualification training, at level 3 and 4, which are recognised qualifications to work in and manage residential settings for children. In accordance with national minimum standards more staff need to complete level 3 training. The Registered Manager holds relevant qualifications. Some equality and diversity training programmes have been delivered. Further training, including some internet modules, are planned.

Staff have good written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The responsible local authority has its own intranet where policies, procedures and recording formats are stored. The home's Statement of Purpose provides good information in accordance with regulations. A staff list attached to this important document is up to date. Aims and objectives as well as the philosophy of care are outlined. Staff use the written guidance to ensure a consistent response to meeting residents' presenting needs. Equality and fairness is reflected within staff's practice and this ensures residents continue to gain positive placement experiences.

Checks are in place to monitor the home's operation. Reports are maintained in-house and these are made available to those permitted to read them. In line with new guidance, reports produced following a regulation 33 visit are forwarded to Ofsted. There is good evidence of the discussions that take place during these visits. Facilitating communication and recording discussions with parents and relatives, as part of this monitoring process, is an area that could be developed further. There is a written development plan (team plan) outlining how the home's operation will be maintained. This plan is due to be reviewed. There is some reflection on practice and improvements identified are managed in an efficient way. The home's management team are open to new initiatives.

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
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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 personnel files are maintained in the same format (NMS 27.1)
- improve the clarity of information within management records (NMS 28.7 & 31.5)
- ensure all staff access further equality and diversity training (NMS 31.5)
- continue supporting staff to complete their National Vocational Qualification at level 3. (NMS 29.5)