

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	6 October 2009
Inspector	Malcolm Stannard / Gaynor Moorey
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	10 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

The Centre is operated and managed by a local authority. It is situated in large grounds on the edge of a town.

The provision cares for boys and girls and is registered as a children's home. It is approved by the Secretary of State to provide secure accommodation for up to 43 young people, between 10 and 17 years of age.

The Centre comprises residential units, a school and administration facilities. There is a swimming pool, gym and outdoor play areas on site for use by young people. Music and dance studios, external areas for horticulture and rooms which enable vocational trade training are also available.

There were twenty seven young people resident at the time of the inspection.

Summary

This was an unannounced inspection to monitor progress against the action and recommendations made at the last inspection in March 2009.

The service was found to have implemented the action and recommendations set at the previous inspection. Children are kept safe by good organisational practices. The premises are not ideal for their purpose, but much has been done to keep them as homely and practical as possible.

The management team at the centre is experienced and the reorganisation of roles has now been embedded. This ensures that leadership and guidance are provided in the most productive manner.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection in March 2009, the management of the centre was required to implement one action and consider five recommendations. Three of the recommendations related to formal education provision and were not inspected on this visit.

A previous action required that all staff receive formal supervision as described in the National Minimum Standards for children's homes. The frequency of formal supervision sessions has increased. Whilst there has been some fluctuation in the attainment figures each month due to staff illness, the number of completed sessions meets the regulation and guidelines of the standard. This means that staff are satisfactorily supported in promoting young people's welfare.

The living accommodation at the centre is mainly situated in ageing buildings. Some refurbishment and redecoration of these areas have been carried out and a maintenance programme is in place to ensure structural and decorative repairs are undertaken. The work carried out has ensured that a domestic style environment is provided which facilitates a good standard of care.

It was recommended that the roles of senior staff members in the new management structure, which was introduced in March 2009, were clarified. Middle managers now have an improved understanding of their roles and responsibilities. This has allowed more targeted work to be carried out and some good external relationships with support services to be developed. Young people benefit from improved individualised care.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is not judged.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is good.

Staff ensure that young people's confidentiality and privacy are respected and safeguarded, for example, by knocking on bedroom doors and enabling the making and receiving of telephones calls where appropriate in private. Confidential information relating to each young person is kept in a locked facility within an office. Staff members receive guidance on the confidentiality of information.

Policies and procedures are in place to help safeguard and promote the young people's welfare. Young people receive a welcome pack when arriving at the centre which contains details of how to complain. Complaints are handled effectively, through the use of clear communication, attentive staff, and close supervision. All complaints are recorded and demonstrate outcomes within anticipated timescales. Two of the complaints seen did not have written outcomes although this information was held elsewhere. Some of the recording is difficult to read because it is handwritten. Staff are proactive in seeking out the views and concerns of young people through the use of one-to-one sessions and residents' meetings,.

Staff receive child protection training within their induction programme and subsequent refresher courses during their employment which gives them clear insight into dealing with these issues. The centre has a clear policy when dealing with child protection which includes up to date safeguarding guidance. Some entries in the child protection records have insufficient detail to show how decisions are reached or what follow up action has been taken. Good links have been established with a range of external professionals and agencies who are involved in the regular auditing of records and events. The unit has safeguarding managers who monitor and advise on safeguarding matters.

The centre operates a policy of zero tolerance toward bullying, and young people are made aware of the guidance on admission. If bullying does occur staff deal with issues in a robust manner which includes restorative practices. The young people have behaviour management plans which contain details of any potential issues related to bullying behaviour. The centre has in place arrangements for young people to talk on a one to one basis or as a group to look at any issues they are experiencing. New initiatives are in place to consider ways of working with the young people to minimise bullying and intimidation of others.

There is a policy and procedure for reporting children who are absent without authority. Records of absconding show there have been no incidents since the last inspection. Staff are provided with clear guidance on how to address such situations and robust risk assessments highlight any dangers the young people may pose to themselves or others. Any mobility involving young people leaving the site is subject to detailed risk assessment before being agreed and staffing

reflects individual needs and concerns. Any serious incidents are reported as required by regulation.

Staff respond positively to acceptable behaviour. Any sanctions are recorded in a dedicated book and also in the individual young person's file. The sanctions given are permissible and dealt with in a fair manner. Sanctions can be linked to the behaviour management scheme where points are collected for positive behaviour and rewards are given. The young people understand the behaviour management scheme and feel it is fair.

All staff receive training in the use of physical restraint. The centre has a policy which offers guidance to staff in regard to behaviour management. Records log any restraint used in the centre but some did not contain clear legible reports of events. The young people have individual risk assessments which are contained within their behaviour management plans. Staff encourage acceptable behaviour and restraint records show that staff respond appropriately in managing these situations. Staff support young people with their behaviour through one to one sessions and daily group meetings. The unit is working on new initiatives to reduce the number of restraints.

Areas of potential risk are assessed and the young people are safeguarded from harm. The centre has documented risk assessments in place for activities, fire and the environment. Records demonstrate that three of the house units fire alarm systems are tested regularly and evacuation exercises carried out. Systems are in place to monitor these records and checks are carried out by outside agencies and the centre's internal monitoring systems. Despite this, one house unit was seen to have had a gap of four months where sufficient checks were not recorded.

Staff records seen for new staff employed since the last inspection indicate that staff are subject to a comprehensive recruitment process. All necessary and required checks are completed prior to staff working with young people. Any agency staff used are vetted by their agency and details forwarded to the centre.

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 satisfactory.

The centre's premises continue to have a domestic rather than institutional feel. Living accommodation is clean and tidy and has been redecorated recently. The living areas at the centre are reaching the end of their useful life and plans are in place for all areas to be replaced by newly built facilities. Whilst the accommodation is beginning to look tired and suffering from wear and tear, a comprehensive redecoration programme has recently been carried out; with all areas attended to. Work has been undertaken to upgrade some of the toilet and shower areas and furnishings such as curtains and carpets have been replaced where necessary. There is a maintenance budget in place; on-site staff carry out repairs promptly and domestic staff ensure the buildings are cleaned daily.

Whilst some of the facilities available are in need of replacement or upgrading, the work carried out to maintain and enhance these areas means that young people are able to experience comfortable and clean living accommodation presented in a domestic style.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

There has been an increase in the number of formal staff supervision sessions completed at the centre. A written record is held of all supervision and appraisals undertaken which is signed by the staff member and the supervisor; with a copy made available for staff records. Working practices, support required and development needs are discussed during sessions. This formal support is available on a monthly basis, with further informal support mechanisms in place as required. New staff members receive more frequent guidance meetings.

A period of extended staff illness affected the capability to complete sessions. However a newly appointed workforce manager is working to negate these problems and improve the frequency and quality of sessions. Staff are supported to carry out their work and the care and welfare protection for young people is effective.

The organisational management structure at the centre has been in place since March 2009. There was a difficult initial period where roles and responsibilities were not clearly defined or understood. The roles for all middle managers and senior staff are now clearly delineated, enabling increased contact to take place with external support services. The middle management team is able to concentrate on ensuring individual plans for young people are in place and followed, as well as offering a more holistic support structure for all staff. Development opportunities for staff are also in place. The clarification of all roles has lessened the likelihood of duplication of tasks.

Some staff members at the centre have been given the responsibility to provide support for those experiencing change. This has proved a positive move with all staff being able to access support and guidance when required. The centre runs efficiently with responsibilities understood and provides a stable environment for young people.

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 that all records relating to complaints and safeguarding of young people are clear, transparent and legible (NMS 16 & 17)
- ensure all records relating to safeguarding issues contain clear outcomes (NMS 17)

- ensure fire equipment checks and practice evacuations are recorded in a consistent manner across the house units. (NMS 26)