

Inspection report for Children's Home

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Inspector	Sarah Oldham
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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

The home is a 72 foot narrow boat that travels around the canal network of the entire country. It is registered for one young person of either sex from aged eight to 17 years. It has been registered as a care home since 14 January 2005 but had previously been used as a holiday placement for children.

Summary

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

This was a key announced inspection. All key national minimum standards were inspected. Actions and recommendations made at the last inspection were also assessed during this visit.

The home provides care for young people to a satisfactory standard. Young people are looked after by the same staff, to enable them to form and develop trusting relationships. They receive good support in accordance with their placement plans and their needs are regularly reviewed. Contact is promoted so that young people sustain their relationships with their families and friends.

As a result of this inspection there are a number of actions and recommendations made for the registered person to address and consider, to improve the home's performance.

Improvements since the last inspection

A number of actions and recommendations were made at the last inspection. The home has ensured that most have been met, resulting in improvements to the quality of care provided. Young people are registered with a doctor, dentist and optician and written permission from a person with parental responsibility is in place to enable staff to provide appropriate support with medication. Staff maintain records of all appointments attended and the outcomes of these and the support required, therefore promoting health appropriately. First aid provisions are in place and all appliances have been serviced as required. There are systems in place for monitoring the care and service that the home provides as required by Schedule 6 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. However, this is not undertaken consistently and therefore this action has been made again.

Risk assessments are in place and include information about whether children are able to swim. This ensures that staff have the necessary information to promote the welfare and safety of young people.

A manager has been appointed to the home. However, an application to be the Registered Manager has not been made to Ofsted. There is a consistent staff team in place who have access to training. However, training records do not demonstrate that staff have undertaken all training as required and the number of staff with the National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People remains below 80%.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people are actively involved in the planning, shopping and preparation of meals. Due to limited storage space, fresh food is purchased on a daily basis. However, some constraints are placed on this if there is limited choice of shops in the area that the boat is in. There is room for storage of dried and tinned goods available to supplement the fresh food. Meals prepared by staff and young people are, in the main, varied and provide young people with a nutritionally balanced diet. They are encouraged by staff to eat healthily although some menus of meals as actually eaten did not clearly demonstrate this and were, at times repetitive. Young people say that they like the food available and feel that the choices that they have are good.

Staff ensure that the health care needs of young people are clearly identified within placement plans. This enables staff to have the appropriate information to enable them to support the young people with these. Authorisation for administration of medication is in place, including the administration of emergency treatment and homely remedies. Young people are registered with health care professionals. Due to the boat covering a wide area, information is maintained with regards to walk-in centres and hospitals on all routes used. This enables young people to attend an appointment in an emergency. Young people are supported to attend planned health care appointments; this ensures that young people have appropriate access to routine health care appointments.

Medication is stored securely and staff have received training on the storage, recording and administration of medication. The staff rota of the home ensures that there is always a member of staff on duty who is trained in first aid. First aid boxes are in place and these are also checked on a regular basis to ensure that they contain appropriate contents for the administration of first aid.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Young people's privacy is respected and their private information is securely stored for the purposes of confidentiality. Young people are able to wash in privacy and they are provided with their own separate cabin, with storage space. However, due to the design of the boat, during the day when cabin doors are open the cabins are a thoroughfare throughout the boat. This is discussed and agreed with young people.

The home has a complaints policy and procedure in place. This is detailed within the Statement of Purpose and the children's guide. Complaints are addressed in accordance with this policy, the outcome of the complaint investigation clearly explained to the person making the complaint and any changes arising following the investigation. This ensures that complaints are responded too.

The home only provides care for one young person, so bullying is not an issue for young people to be concerned with. Staff receive relevant training and this includes training in safeguarding and care and control, to help staff safeguard young people's welfare and safety. Young people's behaviours are assessed and identified risks are recorded; this information enables staff to work with young people safely. Risk assessments are kept under review and any changes recorded with appropriate actions required.

Young people are protected when they absent themselves without authority and staff actively take all reasonable steps to promote their safe return. Young people's behaviours are managed safely. The use of sanctions and restraints are rare. When a sanction has been made these are clearly recorded and explained to the young person. Risk assessments are in place regarding restraints and there have not been any made. However, staff have received training and guidance on this and are aware of the procedure to follow and the records to be maintained. Staff and young people have positive relationships and detailed daily records show that young people engage well with staff in structured activities.

Appropriate health and safety systems and procedures are in place. The boat is serviced and maintenance work is undertaken to ensure that the boat is canal worthy. However, the heating system aboard the boat is not working to ensure that all areas of the boat are maintained to a satisfactory temperature. A wood burning stove is available in the living room area but there is currently no heating within the cabin areas. This does not ensure in colder weather that the heating throughout the boat is appropriate. All other appliances on the boat are contractually serviced, including gas, electrical and fire equipment. Regular fire drills are undertaken; this ensures that young people know how to evacuate the boat safely, in the event of a fire. Risk assessments are in place to identify potential hazards and to further promote the young people's safety and welfare. At the previous inspection it was identified however, that risk assessments as to whether a young person could swim were not routinely undertaken. These risk assessments have now been undertaken.

Recruitment and selection procedures are in place. All staff have current enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosures in place. However, not all staff files contain all information as identified in Schedule 2 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001. Where information is not on file, systems have recently been updated to ensure that this information is obtained. All visitors are required to sign the visitors' book and identification sought; this promotes the welfare of the young people

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The staffing of the home ensures that staff are always available to provide individual support to young people. There are always two staff on duty at all times. Young people's individual needs are outlined in their placement plans and staff ensure that these plans are adhered to.

Young people have their educational needs met to a satisfactory standard. When a young person is not in a school placement, the organisation supports education through their independent school by arranging tutors to support the young people at the home or through the designated school. This enables young people to socialise with their peers. Where a young person has left school, staff liaise with social workers to follow up future plans, including further education. However, when there is a change of social workers for young people, these plans are not consistently identified and this does not ensure that staff and young people have the necessary information to ensure that future education or training plans are in place.

Young people are supported to develop interests and to obtain skills with regards to the moving and running of a canal boat. Routes for the boat to take are planned in conjunction with young people to enable them to plan and choose activities in various locations. However, on occasions when the boat has developed engine problems and is unable to move, this limits the activities that the young people can undertake and contingency plans are not consistently in place in the event of this happening.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Individual needs of young people are clearly identified within their placement plans. These provide staff with the information that they need to work with the young people and to review their needs and progress. These plans are discussed and agreed with the young people, and staff use a wide source of information to develop these plans. Placement plans are also agreed with placing social workers and a copy of the plan is provided to them.

Staff contribute to statutory reviews and encourage young people to attend their reviews. This enables the young people to contribute to these and have their say in the care and support provided to them. Where there is a change of placing social worker, staff liaise with the placing authority to ensure that the views of the young people are clearly reflected to the current social worker.

Young people are supported to maintain contact with their family in accordance with their individual care plan. Staff are aware when there is any restriction on contact to promote the safety of the young people. Records are maintained of contacts and where required, staff provide the necessary resources to facilitate contact, therefore

ensuring that young people sustain relationships with their families.

Young people's views and opinions are sought to ensure that they feel involved in decisions and with the running of the boat. This was observed during the inspection. However, young people's consultation meetings are not consistently recorded to demonstrate that the views of all young people who have been placed within this service have been followed up and any issues identified appropriately addressed.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is inadequate.

Staff at the home support young people in preparation for adulthood. This includes assistance with daily living skills including budgeting, shopping and cooking. However, some pathway plans are overdue although the staff have raised this with placing social workers. This does not ensure that the young people have a clear understanding and involvement in making plans for their future within a timely manner.

The accommodation provided for young people is very different from a domestic family home. The home is a mobile canal boat, which travels along the canals on planned routes, throughout the country. The boat is professionally maintained to ensure it is canal worthy and provides a functional environment for young people to live in. Given that the home is a narrow boat, space and room are somewhat limited, but sufficient. However, the décor and furnishings of the boat are limited and showing signs of wear and tear. The central heating system is currently not working, therefore some areas of the boat do not feel adequately heated and this has resulted in some areas feeling damp and curtains having signs of mildew. There is a log fire in the living area of the boat that provides some heat. Electricity is supplied through a generator. Cooking, washing and basic laundry facilities are in place. There is limited but adequate storage available for young people to store their personal belongings.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose and young people's guide set out the services that will be provided and how these will be provided. This document also includes relevant information about the staffing structure and their qualifications. It is kept under review and updated to reflect any changes to the service. It is provided to placing social workers, parents and carers to enable them to have an overview of the service. Young people are provided with a copy of the young person's guide when they commence at the home. This provides information about day-to-day living at the home.

The number of staff trained to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People is below the specified requirement of 80%. The service provides a core training programme for all staff with mandatory training

including an induction programme, child protection, safeguarding, behaviour management and food hygiene. Training is reviewed on an annual basis for all staff. However, not all training records for staff are up to date to demonstrate that all staff have completed the mandatory training. Staff receive supervision and in recent months this has increased and ensures that staff receive appropriate support and guidance. The home is currently operating without a Registered Manager; although a manager has been appointed, an application to be registered with Ofsted has not been received.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. Young people are cared for by a stable staff team of the same gender and ethnicity. Continuity of care is provided so that young people are able to develop and form trusting relationships with the same staff.

The performance of the home is monitored by the manager although this is not consistently undertaken on a monthly basis. However, the monitoring that has been undertaken has supported the service to improve recording systems and improve practice. Independent monitoring is also undertaken and has largely been conducted within the recommended timescales. Reports are prepared on the conduct of the home and a copy is provided to the staff to enable action to be taken to improve the home's performance. A copy of these reports are provided to Ofsted as required by regulation.

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
27	obtain for all staff, before they start work at the home, all the information set out in Schedule 2 (Regulation 26 (3)(d)(i))	08/11/2010
14	ensure that where any child in a children's home has attained the age where he is no longer required to receive compulsory full-time education, the registered person shall assist with the making of, and give effect to, the arrangements made for education, training and employment (Regulation 18 (3))	20/11/2010
23	ensure that all parts of the home used by children are adequately lit, heated and ventilated and are suitably furnished and reasonably decorated (Regulation 31 (2)(a)(c)(e))	30/11/2010
33	ensure there are systems in place to monitor matters set out in Schedule 6 of the Children's Homes Regulations 2001 at suitable intervals. (Regulation 34(1))	20/11/2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure that the record of menus (as served) demonstrates provision of a suitable and varied diet (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that there are records of children's meetings are maintained (NMS 8.1)
- ensure that the home is decorated and furnished to a standard which creates a pleasant domestic environment (NMS 24.2)
- ensure the written record of staff training is accurate and up to date (NMS 31.4)
- ensure a minimum ratio of 80% of all staff are trained to National Vocational Qualification at level 3 in Caring for Children and Young People (NMS 29.5)
- ensure a Registered Manager is appointed and registered with Ofsted. (NMS 29.1)