

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
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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 service provides activity-based intervention for young people who are experiencing a period of difficulty or crisis. Up to three individual placements for young people aged between 12 and 17 years of either gender are provided. Placements are usually short term and are activity based.

A planned yet flexible programme designed to meet a young person's individual needs and circumstances is agreed with placing authorities. Young people are cared for by two members of staff at various locations around the United Kingdom in accommodation that includes bunkhouses, youth hostels, campsites, canal boats and an ocean-going yacht.

Mobile units can be operative in a wide geographical area, although the service is managed centrally from the organisation's main office. Communication systems allow for regular contact to be maintained and services in the field are visited regularly by the manager and other senior staff.

Summary

At this unannounced, full inspection all the key standards were inspected. The recommendations made at the previous inspection were also followed up.

The service is generally well organised and managed, although the logistics of managing a service spread over a wide geographical area can pose problems regarding some administrative and management tasks. However, the manager is regularly reviewing and updating practice and administrative systems with a view to greater improvement, as the service continues to develop.

The service is fully operational and each of the three young people being accommodated were visited at their respective locations. They speak positively about the service, staff, manager and the way they are being cared for. They say they feel safe and all have specific plans for the future. Each one is enjoying a stable placement and looks to the future with optimism.

No major issues, concerns or complaints were raised by either staff or young people. No actions have been raised as a result of the inspection. The report contains five good practice recommendations. They link to ensuring all staff are trained in first aid and physical intervention, attaining more consistency with formal staff supervision and external monitoring and looking to achieve the recommended ratio of staff having completed appropriate training. The recommendations linked to staff supervision and appropriate staff training are carried over from the previous inspection.

Whilst the overall quality rating of the service remains as satisfactory, significant progress has been made in staying safe, enjoying and achieving and positive contribution, all of which have been raised to good.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection four recommendations were made. They were linked to ensuring that staff are trained in the same physical intervention techniques; for greater consistency in the formal supervision of staff; improved implementation of staff meetings and aiming to achieve the minimum ratio of qualified staff in place.

Two have been addressed positively. All physical intervention training provided by the organisation now follows one model. Staff meetings are taking place regularly, with an improvement in the frequency and consistency of meetings taking place.

Whilst the regularity of formal staff supervision has generally improved, a shortfall remains regarding the consistency and frequency of supervision for the whole of the staff group. The recommendation has been repeated.

An influx of new staff who are currently working through their probationary period, partially explains why the service is not meeting the targets set in the standards to have a minimum of 80% of all care staff having completed appropriate professional training. This recommendation has also been repeated.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

The health needs of young people are promoted positively. All young people currently using the service have access to doctors and opticians. Arrangements can also be made for young people to be seen by a dentist if necessary and follow up any specialist medical input they may be receiving. An option exists for young people to retain their own doctor and dentist if practical, or register with a practice local to the organisation's main office.

Health details are held on a young person's file, with a specific health section and plan contained in the planning documentation. This includes a relevant health history. Training for staff in basic food hygiene and the administering of medication, forms part of the staff core training programme. First aid training is also included, but a number of staff have yet to undertake this training.

Records of any prescribed or non-prescribed medication administered to a young person are kept. These are up to date and properly kept. The storage facilities for medication are satisfactory and differ from location to location.

Young people confirm they are encouraged to be involved in planning, choosing, shopping and preparing food. Planning documentation promotes healthy food and good nutrition. Due to the nature of the service, food can be eaten in a variety of settings and circumstances. Records of the daily food intake for each young person are kept.

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. In the three locations visited, two are houses where young people have their own bedroom, with other spaces available for privacy, if required. Privacy in the third, a canal boat, has been greatly enhanced since the previous inspection. This

has been achieved by fitting doors that block off individual sleeping space, providing everyone on board with a private space. All sensitive and personal information is stored securely.

Young people understand how to access the complaints procedures, with written information contained in the guides provided for them. This includes the contact details of a range of independent bodies and agencies. Records are kept of all complaints received, along with responses and outcomes.

The safety and rights of young people are protected. Since the previous inspection, there have been no safeguarding issues raised as a direct result of a young person being placed with the service. However, safeguarding issues affecting young people prior to admission are being addressed appropriately. The manager and staff are working cohesively with other external agencies specifically charged with safeguarding responsibilities. The service has its own safeguarding procedures which staff are aware of and safeguarding training forms part of the ongoing core staff training programme.

As young people are placed individually, opportunities to bully or be bullied are rare. None of the young people have any concerns, issues or worries, with bullying not a live issue to any of them.

Each young person is stable in their placement and behaviour management, unsafe or challenging behaviour is not a live issue. For example, none have received sanctions or been reported missing and there has only been one isolated incident that required physical intervention. Detailed records are kept of any sanctions imposed, incidents of young people missing without authority and incidents of physical intervention. Not all staff have yet received training in physical intervention.

Young people speak positively about their experiences of the service and the staff caring for them. They acknowledge their lives are more stable and each one has specific and positive plans for the future. Young people state quite categorically that they feel safe and are happy in their placement.

Safety is an area that has been prioritised and this is reflected in the range of risk assessments that have been completed. They cover all aspects of the service such as facilities used, locations, accommodation, campsites, activities, canal boats and the yacht. Each young person also has a comprehensive individual risk assessment completed.

All staff receive appropriate checks and clearances before they commence their duties. All longer serving staff have had their clearance re-checked within the last three years. Recruitment procedures are comprehensive, meeting with regulatory requirement and recognised good practice.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Young people are placed individually and looked after by two staff. Programmes are formulated to meet their specific needs, circumstances and requirements. For example, maintaining approved contact and following up any outstanding medical, educational or judicial commitments. This ensures that good levels of individual support are provided, with evidence to support this

reflected in a young person's planning documentation, individual risk assessment and daily observation sheets.

Formal education and regular school attendance has often broken down when young people are first referred to the service. Systems are in place to re-engage young people into education, with support and oversight provided by tutors from the organisation's own school. Individual programmes are arranged to take account of a young person's educational needs and if applicable, any current educational arrangements they may have. For example, a young person returned recently to their home area to complete exams. A number of activities have an educational bias and educational facilities can be utilised at some locations used by the service.

The individual outcomes educationally, for the young people currently accommodated are good. One has just completed their formal education programme by taking exams. For two others, arrangements are in place for them to receive full time education when schools recommence in September. Young people speak positively about their own plans and show a willingness and determination to engage positively with their education.

The whole concept of the service is activity based and young people are introduced to a range of outdoor activities on both land and water. Specific weekly programmes are designed to include a range of the activities on offer, providing they meet the identified needs and requirements of the young person and their placing authority. Taster sessions, where young people are introduced to new experiences can be arranged.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is good.

The service produces a series of documents that make up the placement plan. When read collectively, they provide a good insight into a young person's individual needs, along with plans and strategies to address them. The quality of the plans has improved since the previous inspection. They cover all the areas required including a young person's religious, cultural and identity needs. Young people are well informed about their own plans, speaking positively about themselves and the plans for their future.

Statutory reviews are taking place within the required timescale, with suitable records held on a young person's file. Young people confirm they are encouraged to attend reviews and feel well supported by staff throughout the entire reviewing process.

Contact arrangements can be restrictive and complex, often to ensure a young person's safety. Staff arrange and facilitate contact as appropriate. Contact details, along with records of all contact maintained are included in planning documentation and the day to day recording completed by staff.

Staff understand the procedures for admitting and discharging young people from the service, which are underpinned by guidance available in the staff handbook. The admissions policy and procedures are reflected in the Statement of Purpose and include arrangements for emergency admissions. Young people speak positively about their own experiences when first admitted, feeling the process was conducted with sensitivity and supportively.

Due to the unique nature of the placement, consultation between staff and young people is ongoing, taking place on a daily basis. A young person's programme has time set aside for them

to choose certain activities. Decisions such as these are reached through consultation. The relationships between staff and young people were observed as excellent throughout the inspection.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

Preparing young people to leave care is not a specific function of the service, due to the nature and length of placements. However, developing greater independence is included in the key targets set for young people.

Appropriate records for clothing, personal requisites and pocket money form part of the daily records completed by staff. Specialist clothing and equipment is provided.

Three locations used by the service were visited during the inspection. They included one water based and two land based sites. All accommodation is designed to be short term, with young people moving around regularly. The quality of accommodation differs from venue to venue. However the general state of repair, fixtures, fittings, equipment, furnishings and décor are deemed as satisfactory, when viewed collectively.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The Statement of Purpose, last revised in June 2010, provides a good insight into the way the service is organised and how it functions. Young people are provided with a range of written information and guidance about the service. This includes a newly introduced welcome booklet written in a question and answer format. All documents meet with regulatory requirement.

The promotion of equality and diversity is satisfactory. The service has policies on a number of areas linked to this subject along with guidance for staff and information for young people. The individual needs of young people are recognised and addressed in planning documentation. Whilst yet to be fully utilised, the core staff training programme includes equality and diversity training for staff, with the next session planned to take place on 9 November 2010. Introductory training has now been included in the induction programme for new staff.

Feedback from staff indicates they generally feel well supported. There is evidence of more formal supervision and appraisal taking place, although the consistency and frequency for all staff still falls below the timescale recommended in the standards. Records show that staff meetings are taking place regularly, each month.

Six new full time staff have been recruited since the previous inspection and are currently undertaking their probationary period. The general increase in numbers and availability of staff allows for the function of the service and its specialised programmes to be fulfilled adequately. The number of staff with an appropriate National Vocational Qualification remains well below the minimum numbers recommended in the standards. However, some training has commenced and plans are in place for more staff to undertake professional training in the autumn.

Duty rotas are planned in advance, providing adequate staff cover at all times. Staff have access to training through the corporate training programme which is ongoing. This includes National Vocational Qualification or equivalent training once a staff member has successfully completed

their probationary period. New staff undertake induction training as well as an expectation to complete a six month probationary period. New staff feel well supported and speak positively about the induction process.

As well as regular management oversight which includes visiting staff and young people in the field on a weekly basis, systems to formally monitor the service both internally and externally are in place. Reports are written as a result of this process and contain elements of quality control. The internal monitoring is taking place within the required timescale, but some slippage with the external monitoring has been noted.

Young people's case files are neat, well ordered and properly kept. Central files are held at the organisation's main office, with daily records transported with young people to whichever venue they are staying at.

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 initial or updated training in first aid (NMS 13.5)
- ensure that all staff are fully trained in physical intervention (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that the formal supervision for all staff takes place consistently, within the recommended timescale (NMS 28.2)
- aim towards achieving a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff having completed appropriate National Vocational Qualification or equivalent training (NMS 29.5)
- ensure the external monitoring of the service takes place consistently, within the required timescale. (NMS 32.1)