

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 with young people who are experiencing a period of difficulty or crises. 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 all times and stay at various locations around the United Kingdom in accommodation that includes bunkhouses, youth hostels, campsites along with canal boats and an ocean going yacht.

Summary

At the time of the previous inspection, the service was inoperative and had been for over 12 months. The appointment and registration of a new manager with ongoing staff recruitment has resulted in a reorganisation of the original service. The service recommenced operations in spring of this year and now operates under the umbrella of the owning companies policies, procedures, guidelines and working practices.

Whilst the mobile units can be operative in a wide geographical area, the service is managed centrally from the companies main offices. Good communication systems allow for regular contact to be maintained and visits take place to each operative mobile at least weekly.

The service is still young and areas such as administration continue to develop. The initial priority has been one of safety and risk assessments are in place to cover all aspects of the mobiles operation. The service has been recently inspected and continues to be licensed to operate its outdoor activities by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority.

The logistics of overseeing and managing a complex service that at times is physically widespread, is a challenge. A clear plan for continued development is in place. The working practices and administrative systems are still developing and are being constantly revised.

The overall quality rating for the service is satisfactory. No actions have been made as a result of the inspection, but the report contains eight good practice recommendations.

The overall quality rating is satisfactory.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

As the service was not operating when the last inspection took place, no actions or recommendations were made. There were no outstanding historical actions or recommendations to bring forward.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Menus are planned with young people who are also encouraged to participate in the shopping. Young people's 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, although some are not completed with consistency.

The health needs of young people are promoted positively. Young people can either keep their own doctor, dentist and optician or be registered with practices local to the company's main office. Details are held on a young person's file. A specific health section is incorporated into a young person's planning documentation, along with relevant health history. The corporate staff training programme includes basic food hygiene, first aid and the administering of medication, which some staff have completed.

Separate records are maintained for any prescribed and non prescribed medication administered. Safe storage facilities differ and are dependent on a young person's location.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Privacy is an issue that is handled with some sensitivity by staff recognising it can be an issue in some of the locations and facilities in use. No issues or concerns were raised by young people who have some guidance about privacy which is contained in the handbooks provided to them.

The same handbooks contain information about the complaints system along with a range of contact details for external agencies. Records are made of any complaint received in the field at that time, with central records detailing both the complaint and its outcome.

The safety and rights of staff and young people are protected. Any safeguarding issues would be referred immediately to the appropriate agencies should such a situation arise. This is in line with the companies own safeguarding procedures. Most staff have undertaken safeguarding training which forms part of the ongoing corporate staff training programme. Bullying in individual placements such as these has not been a problem and is not a live issue.

Practical procedures, underpinned by policy and guidance, are implemented if a young person goes missing. Appropriate records are kept both in the field and centrally.

Additional measures are used sparingly. Appropriate records of any measures imposed are made at the time they are given, as well as being recorded centrally. Similarly, records of any incidents of physical intervention are also kept. Recent changes to the provider of physical intervention training has been made. This means that currently, apart from a brief introduction, not all staff have received the same form of training. Plans are in place to rectify this. Young people raised no issues or concerns about any area linked to being safe.

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.

The systems for clearing and recruiting staff follow set procedures and staff do not start their employment until suitable clearances have been received. Whilst recruitment and clearance

procedures are satisfactory, gaps were noted in the quality of some information provided in application forms.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is satisfactory.

The service works with individual young people and programmes are formulated to meet their specific needs, circumstances and requirements. This process ensures that good levels of individual support are provided. This is evidenced in the planning documentation, individual risk assessments and daily observation sheets.

Placements would normally be time limited. They are sought by placing authorities because of the need to intervene quickly for a specified time, usually away from the area where a young person lives. Individual programmes are arranged to take account of a young person's educational needs and if applicable, any current arrangements they may have. Those needs are reflected in the planning documentation. A number of activities have an educational bias and educational facilities exist in a bunkhouse, owned by the company which is available for use if required.

The whole concept of the service is activity based and young people are introduced to a range of outdoor activities that are based on land and water. Specific four 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 satisfactory.

As well as the four weekly programme, the planning documentation includes individual risk assessments as well as an interim placement plan and daily provision guide. It is here the aims of the placement, along with identified needs and requirements are addressed. Placement plans cover all the areas recommended in the standards, although the section on religious and cultural needs is brief in content.

Statutory reviews are taking place within the required timescale, with records of them held on a young person's file. Reviews are included when the programme is planned to ensure a young person's availability. Contact arrangements are laid out in the placement plans with visits built into individual programmes where applicable.

Staff have guidance in the staff handbook about the procedures to be adopted when a young person is first accommodated. The admissions policy and procedures are reflected in the statement of purpose and includes arrangements for emergency admissions. Young people have no issues about the way staff dealt with them on admission.

Because of the nature of the placement, consultation between staff and young people takes 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.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is satisfactory.

The manager is aware of the need to incorporate pathway planning into the services own plans when a young person is being prepared to leave care, with a recent example of this occurring.

Young people bring some clothing and personal requisites with them, but all specialised clothing and equipment is supplied.

Venues and the type of accommodation vary, ranging from bunkhouses, campsites and general camping to living on water. All are risk assessed. Usually young people move around frequently in an effort to gain different experiences.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

The statement of purpose, revised recently, provides a good insight into the way the service is organised and how it functions. Young people are given written information and guidance about the service and what they can expect. Relevant information, which includes their rights is included. 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. The corporate staff training programme recently introduced equality and diversity into the programme and whilst yet to be implemented, an in house training package has also been devised.

A proportion of the staff currently working with the service are from other projects within the company. This makes who supervises who and when at times, confusing. The imminent introduction of dedicated staff should provide greater clarity and consistency regarding formal supervision. However, currently monitoring and gaining an overview of the supervision programme is difficult due to the current arrangements. Arranging and implementing regular staff meetings within the recommended timescale, has also proved to be difficult.

The number, experience and adequacy of staffing allows for the function of the service and specialised programmes to be fulfilled. Not all staff currently working with the service have attained an appropriate National Vocational Qualification (NVQ). The expected influx of five new dedicated staff means the ratio of qualified staff is likely to remain below the recommended minimum for some time.

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 NVQ training once a staff member has successfully completed their probationary period. New staff undertake an induction 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.

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 records of meals served are completed consistently and accurately, reflecting a young person's daily food intake (NMS 10.4)
- ensure that all staff are trained in the same physical intervention techniques (NMS 22.8)
- ensure that applicants have provided all the required, detailed information when application forms are submitted (NMS 27.1)
- ensure the religious and cultural needs of young people and how they are to be met, are identified and included in sufficient depth within their placement plan (NMS 2.1)
- improve the systems currently used that provides an overview of the ongoing staff supervision programme (NMS 28.1)
- ensure that staff meetings take place consistently within the recommended timescale (NMS 28.10)
- aim towards achieving a minimum ratio of 80% of all care staff having completed appropriate NVQ training (NMS 29.5)
- ensure the external monitoring of the service takes place consistently within the required timescale (NMS 32.1).