

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	10 July 2009
Inspector	Carole Moore
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	9 December 2008
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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 is an independently operated children's home on a working arable farm, situated in Warwickshire. It is a small group home for adolescents with behavioural difficulties resulting from past emotional or physical trauma.

Summary

This unannounced full inspection concentrates on assessing the key National Minimum Standards focusing on the outcome areas of Being Healthy, Staying Safe, Enjoying and Achieving, Positive Contribution and Economic Wellbeing. The inspection also considered how the home is managed and how staff are supported. The progress towards the recommendations made during the last inspection is also considered. Two young people living in the home were present during the inspection and surveys indicate that they are positive about the home and the staff.

The home provides an environment where individual needs are important and where staff are actively promoting their social inclusion in the home and wider community. The home has a consistent stable staff team that is managed well and supported by sound policies and procedures. Managers provide good day-to-day support and effective guidance to staff to enable them to do their work. The home also has a clear focus on ensuring young people are protected and that known and potential risks are managed in a way that supports their safety and wellbeing.

Overall this was a positive inspection with clear evidence of the promotion of equality and diversity and outstanding practice resulting in positive outcomes for the young people in placement.

One recommendation has been raised as a result of this inspection.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

During the last inspection that took place in December 2008, two recommendations were made.

The home was asked to ensure that there is a clear medication policy with written guidance, implemented in practice for storing, disposing and administering controlled drugs and this is now clearly in place.

The young people's guide now includes the name, address and telephone number of Ofsted.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

Young people's health is effectively promoted through a range of informative policies and procedures that are used by staff to guide and inform their practice. Staff are provided with detailed information that supports young people's personal, social and health education. Staff are well informed about individual needs because written information is up-to-date and communicated effectively. Well-maintained written records ensure placing social workers, carers

or families, where appropriate, are informed of the current status of young people's health and wellbeing. Young people are also encouraged to take some responsibility for their own health and they have personalised health diaries to enable them to do this.

Young people's health and safety is promoted through the home's policies and procedures for the safe storage, administration and disposal of medication. Administration records demonstrate that staff are following prescription instructions in relation to the health needs of individual young people. Procedures for controlled drugs are now firmly in place.

Young people are supported to access community health services to ensure good health is maintained and improved according to their individual needs. Staff have access to a range of information and advice to help them support young people make healthy lifestyle choices. Staff recognise the importance of working closely with health care professionals as well as directly with young people themselves. There is also an in house therapist to ensure young people's emotional needs are being met.

Young people's good health is further promoted by the home's commitment to providing a balanced and varied diet. Weekly food menus are planned in advance and involve young people who are able to influence the choice of meals. Staff encourage young people to stick to the planned menu but do accommodate requests to vary mealtimes to suit circumstances on any given day. Young people can access fresh fruit as well as snacks and drinks when needed.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Young people benefit from living in an environment that proactively and effectively safeguards and protects their welfare. Staff have a professional focus on matters relating to young people's protection with clear guidance that is communicated effectively to promote their safety and wellbeing. Managers provide strong leadership that consistently promotes an environment where safety is important.

Young people are being kept safe because staff demonstrate a clear understanding of what their key role and responsibilities are in terms of protection. Staff understand the need to respect privacy and confidentiality, to manage behaviour in a way that is fair and consistent, to work within the home's child protection procedures and to promote a bullying free environment. Young people are actively encouraged to improve their awareness and understanding about how to keep themselves safe. This work is supported by a range of policies and procedures, which are underpinned by a programme of staff training.

Young people's views and opinions about their care is valued because the home's staff are conscientious and child-focused. Young people are provided with information about how to make a complaint when they first arrive at the home. Young people felt that concerns are dealt with quickly by staff without having to use the formal complaints procedure unless absolutely necessary. They described a range of forums available to them to discuss concerns either privately or as a household.

Staff have a very good awareness of child protection procedures and any concerns or allegations are promptly passed on to the local authority team for action. A rolling programme of child protection training is available for staff to update and refresh their knowledge. Staff make it clear to young people that bullying is not acceptable and this is reinforced in the written house

rules. Some young people go missing without authority and there are known policies and procedures in place to deal with these situations. There is regular contact and liaison with the local police regarding these matters.

Staff communicate clear expectations regarding boundaries which sufficiently help young people to begin to understand consequences for their behaviour. Staff's approach to behaviour is based on redirection and purposeful intervention to calm the situation quickly. Restraints are only used when felt really necessary to ensure safety. Staff are trained in physical intervention, restraint and de-escalation techniques with regular refresher training. The home has individual behaviour management plans for young people who present challenging and aggressive behaviour, identifying details about the behaviours, how they are to be prevented, managed and reviewed. Staff regularly discuss the behaviour approaches and agree as a team how to respond to young people.

The home protects young people by ensuring a range of environmental risk assessments have been undertaken and regularly reviewed. The risk assessments cover all aspects of safety of the premises and grounds including fire and young people's behaviour and activities. These assessments are taken into account in the daily activities in the home. A similar process is followed for activities outside of the home, for example, trips out. The fire log book shows that there are regular checks of the alarm systems and the home has completed the required number of fire drills or evacuations. The home has the required public and employee liability insurance, however, the certificate does not specify the name of the home as required.

Young people are protected by robust staff recruitment procedures and records of new staff confirmed that all relevant checks have been carried out. The home is selective, with the recruitment of the right person being more important than the filling of the vacancy.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

Young people receive a high level of individual support and guidance that is consistent with their identified needs and overall plan of care. Link workers are responsible for ensuring everyday requirements are being met and that social workers and other professionals are kept informed about progress and developments.

Young people have an allocated link worker but this arrangement is not promoted to the exclusion of other staff offering support and guidance. Staff are able to focus on the different needs of each young person because there are individual plans of care that detail the aims of each placement and the actions associated with successful outcomes. Staff understand the importance of acknowledging young people's differences so that needs relating to areas such as ethnicity, religion, gender and disability can be identified and met. Staff are fully aware of known and potential risks because this information is communicated effectively.

Staff are well informed about matters that are significant to the lives of young people who are admitted to the home. Information is appropriately shared within the staff group to aid the delivery of a consistent service. Policies and procedures ensure young people are encouraged and supported to access a range of leisure and community facilities that are based on their own preferences and choices. Young people really enjoyed the recent sports day where families, friends and social workers were invited to join in with the varied activities of the day.

Arrangements for young people's education is promoted through the home's education policy. It clearly sets out the roles and responsibilities of staff in relation to school attendance and learning. Young people are being supported by staff who place a high importance on learning and development. Young people's files contain a good range of information regarding education, consequently staff are well informed about individual needs. The home's records demonstrate that staff are actively involved in supporting and promoting young people's educational arrangements. Regular communication takes place between education settings and the home regarding young people's progress and attendance. Where local authorities are delaying access to education the Registered Manager is proactive in calling meetings, following up placing social workers and putting in place a home education programme.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

Information the home has about young people's needs is detailed and informative. Significant work is undertaken prior to and at the point of admission to ensure the needs of the young person and the needs of others already living at the home are taken into consideration. Staff and managers demonstrate thoughtful and sensitive insight into the young people for whom they provide a service. Reviews take place at regular intervals and are usually held within the home. Young people are encouraged to attend and contribute to these meetings, which is evidenced in their individual files. Staff also produce information on a regular basis about young people's care and progress, they share this information with their families, where appropriate, and other professionals. These professionals report that they welcome these summary reports and it strengthens their understanding of the young person's placement.

The staff encourage young people to contribute to the running of the home and make suggestions. Regular house meetings are held with a written record of the discussion points and requests. House meetings are always followed by staff meetings in order that young people can have a response to the issues raised promptly. The home is proactive in ensuring that all young people are aware that they can speak to independent agencies and professionals outside of the home. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to promoting consultation and involve young people in the running of the home. The paperwork in young people's files is child friendly and the staff encourage young people to read and sign their daily summaries. Young people stated that they felt listened to.

The promotion of contact is outstanding. Young people acknowledged the length managers and staff go to ensure the involvement of family members in not only their day-to-day lives but also in key events. Staff are creative and flexible when supporting transport, organising contact visits and promoting positive relationships.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

The home is located in a rural position but there is easy access to schools, colleges, leisure facilities, transport, shops and other community facilities that are important to the young people placed. Its size and the arrangements of rooms suits the needs of the young people. The accommodation is domestic in style, homely, well decorated, maintained and furnished to a high standard, providing ample space for communal and individual activities. The house sits in the middle of a working farm and the grounds provides ample space for young people to play and exercise. The home is subject to an ongoing process of redecoration and refurbishment

with repairs and maintenance being addressed in order of importance. Staff work to a schedule of domestic routines to ensure the home is clean and tidy. Young people are able to personalise their bedrooms and they are satisfied with the accommodation provided.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

The home's statement of purpose, children's guide and policies and procedures provide a significant range of information about services and arrangements for young people's care. The home is well managed and this is having a positive impact on the outcomes for young people. Staff are aware of the principles and aims of the home and are positive and enthusiastic about their work using a variety of creative measures to engage the young people.

Young people are provided with a service that includes a stable and committed team of staff who deliver consistent care and support. The organisation has a good staff training programme that includes key areas of learning for new staff as well as refresher training for existing team members. In addition, there is a national vocational training programme in place to ensure all staff can achieve the appropriate level of qualification which is consistent to their roles and responsibilities. Staff have a good understanding of young people's needs and shift teams are sufficient in number to provide the right care, support and supervision. The Registered Manager provides good support to the team which in turn helps to shape staff practice and the team's overall effectiveness.

Staff are well supported through weekly team meetings and by a manager and senior staff who are available and approachable. Staff consider their one-to-one supervision to be very useful, supportive and that it allows for development and reflection of their practice. In addition to supervision there is an open door policy so staff feel able to share opinions or ask advice at any time. Staff shift handovers are well planned to ensure all information is exchanged and shared.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. The home operates in a way that demonstrates a clear recognition of the varied and different needs young people have. Each young person has a plan of care in place that fully identifies each individual's needs in terms of their ethnicity, race, religion, culture, gender, disability and language. Awareness and knowledge has been further improved in this area because all staff have received certificated training in 'Valuing Diversity'. Young people are supported by a dedicated staff team who maintain a flexible approach to providing care. Consequently, young people are making excellent progress because of the clear management systems that are in place.

The Registered Manager has excellent systems in place to monitor the operation of the home and the overall progress of each young person. Regular visits are made to the home by organisational representatives and findings are reflected in written monitoring reports. The Registered Manager responds to these reports along with other activities relating to the evaluation of the service. For instance, the Registered Manager is well informed about placing social workers views regarding the progress of individual young people. Currently, the home has gained some very positive feedback from placing social workers about the success of young people's placements. Young people confirmed that their views are continually sought by the manager when he looks at the quality of care being provided.

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 the certificate of insurance specifies the name and address of the home (NMS26.9).