

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspection date	20 July 2010
Inspector	Stephen Trainor
Type of Inspection	Random

Date of last inspection	25 February 2010
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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 home offers care and accommodation for up to four young people, between the ages of 10 and 17 years old with emotional or behavioural difficulties.

It is a detached cottage with three bedrooms, and an annex that provides a semi-independent unit for one young person. Both buildings are situated in spacious gardens, two miles from the local shopping centre and all local leisure facilities. Other shops are a short walking distance from the home.

At the time of the inspection three young people were at home and all of them took part in the inspection.

Summary

This interim, unannounced inspection comments on the outcome areas staying safe and organisation. Progress against actions and recommendations made during the last inspection was evaluated.

The young people are experiencing stable placements and they are being looked after in a safe environment. There are no concerns relating to physical intervention and sanctions, safeguarding or missing from home. There have been no reportable significant events between inspections.

Health and safety are managed well. All staff are recruited properly. Good standards of care are being provided and staff are knowledgeable about each resident's needs. Placement plans outline individual's needs and are supported by risk assessments. The management team are working closely with two placing authorities from a considerable distance to the home; good partnership arrangements have been established and there is good consultation and communication.

This report highlights two actions and six recommendations to improve practice. Some management records contain insufficient information. The correct supervision frequency is not being maintained. There is a disjointed approach to staff personal development and appraisal. The percentage of the staff team holding National Vocational Qualifications at level 3 is under 80%. The staffing list contained within the Statement of Purpose is not up to date and this important document is not dated. The level of detail in Regulation 33 reports does not help to promote improvement in the provision of care.

The overall quality rating is good.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

Most of the actions and recommendations made at the last inspection have been suitably addressed or remain as a work in progress, in the case of improving practice through monitoring visits. The accommodation is safe following a review of fire precautions. Equipment is being serviced and risk assessments are up to date. Personnel details are clear on each staff member working at the home.

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.

Arrangements for staff recruitment, complaints, safeguarding children, bullying and behaviour management are handled well and ensure that young people feel listened to and protected. Safeguarding policies are clear and staff practice is reflective of the procedural guidance within these policies. No concerns were highlighted throughout the course of this inspection and the young people confirm that they are safe. No notifications have been made to Ofsted between inspections; neither have there been any complaints. No safeguarding concerns have affected the home's operation and there are few reports on young people going missing without permission. Safe and transparent practice is demonstrated in all the above areas. Staff are knowledgeable about each resident's needs and are able to support these needs on a day-to-day basis. Specific safeguarding issues that prompt the need for placement are addressed sensitively and comprehensively.

The management team and staff have established good partnership arrangements with placing authorities. Consultation and communication are effective. A suitable framework of support keeps young people safe and the support provided ensures that the young people continually develop skills. Staff possess good skills to support the young people and this means that they are experiencing stable placements.

Suitable safeguarding and complaints information is provided for the young people. Staff have received child protection training, in order that they can respond appropriately to allegations or suspicions of abuse. The policy and procedural guidance established at this home is consistent with local safeguarding team protocols. A protocol is established with local police to report young people when they go missing without permission. An incident was managed extremely well during the course of this inspection. The recording log was accurate and relevant people had been notified. Staff maintained telephone contact throughout. However, there is no evidence to show that return interviews are taking place. These are important if safeguarding issues are to be identified.

There is effective use of positive reinforcement as opposed to the use of sanctions and the young people respond very well to praise. There have been few incidents between inspections requiring physical intervention. However, it is not clear that there is a bound book to record incidents requiring physical intervention and incident sheets do not show that the young people reflect on incidents that they are involved in. There are opportunities to attend training but staff are unable to describe the methods and techniques being used. Staff with key worker responsibilities do uphold children's rights as well as providing daily support to achieve and develop.

The home manages health and safety in relation to the premises well. Certification is held centrally to show servicing and maintenance of the electrical installations, the fire system and portable appliance testing. The fire risk assessment for the premises is reviewed annually. Records of practice fire drills were not available but the young people confirmed that practice drills are carried out. Risk assessments are being maintained to support the home's operation and residents' safety.

Personnel information viewed demonstrated that a suitable recruitment procedure is being followed. Good records are provided within a central file and the recruitment process is easy to follow. Checks confirmed no staff start ahead of being in receipt of enhanced Criminal Records Bureau checks. Good practice is also supported with staff carrying identity badges when they are out in the surrounding community. Vetting of visitors to the home is undertaken, with identity checks being carried out before access is permitted.

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 not judged.

Organisation

The organisation is good.

This unannounced inspection coincided with a period of extended sickness affecting the Registered Manager. A senior staff member with management responsibilities had also been taken ill a few days prior to the inspection. Some contingency arrangements had been put in place but staff had not been fully prepared for an unannounced inspection by Ofsted or for shift leader responsibility. It was not possible to access some management records and fully evaluate the response to recommendations made during the last inspection. However, the absence of management did not have a detrimental impact on the good quality of care provided to young people and thus the overall good judgement achieved at the past four inspections is retained due to the strength of staff's practice.

The home has remained stable between inspections under the leadership of the Registered Manager and the support provided by a capable team of staff. Regular meetings take place to discuss practice issues, the staff team remain well motivated and are clear about their individual roles.

Some of the records about the management support being provided to staff lack clarity. Induction support is coordinated well and good records are maintained. However, the frequency of supervision is not clear and it was not possible to ascertain whether the Registered Manager receives professional supervision. Information on staff personal development and appraisal is disjointed. Staff commented that they receive good access to training but records of training attended are not accurate and fewer than 80% of staff have a National Vocational Qualification at level 3.

Deployment of staff is satisfactory and the needs of the young people are being met while ensuring the necessary administrative tasks are undertaken. There have been few changes to the staffing structure between inspections.

Staff have relevant written guidance, policies and procedures to support their practice. The home's Statement of Purpose provides information in accordance with regulations. The aims and objectives, as well as the philosophy of care, are outlined. However, this document was

not dated and did not contain details of the staff working at the home. This makes it difficult to make a judgment about the overall competence of staff.

Quality assurance systems are being used by the home's management team to maintain the home's operation, including monthly monitoring checks. Reports are maintained in-house and these are made available to those permitted to read them. Reports are also being forwarded to Ofsted in line with an agreed protocol. There is some consultation with young people but few comments are being captured on the views expressed by staff, parents or relatives. The level of detail in Regulation 33 reports does not help to promote improvement in the provision of care. Reports produced under Regulation 34 and the home's development plan were not accessible.

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
34	notify Ofsted of the absence of the Registered Manager and establish suitable contingency arrangements for running the home (Regulation 37 (3))	31 July 2010
1	ensure the Statement of Purpose is dated and contains an up-to-date staffing list. (Regulation 4(1) Schedule 1 (5))	31 July 2010

Recommendations

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

- ensure young people are given the opportunity to discuss and reflect on incidents that they are involved in (NMS 22.14 and 19.4)
- ensure staff are aware of the methods and techniques to be used if physical intervention is required and record these in an appropriately bound and numbered book (NMS 22.8 and 22.9)
- ensure better clarity within the management records with particular reference to supervision frequency, including that of the Registered Manager, personal development and appraisal (NMS 28.2 and 28.7)
- improve the level of detail and evaluation in the Regulation 33 reports in order to promote improvement in the provision of care (NMS 32)
- maintain an up-to-date record of all training attended (NMS 31.4)
- ensure staff members placed in charge of the home have substantial relevant experience with particular reference to more staff completing their National Vocational Qualification at level 3. (NMS 29.3)