

Inspection report for children's home

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Inspector	Graham Robinson
Type of Inspection	Key

Date of last inspection	8 October 2009
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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 provides medium- to long-term care for up to three children from nine years of age. The organisation specialises in working with children and young people who are deemed to suffer from an attachment disorder or attachment difficulty. All admissions are planned.

As well as residential provision, the organisation provides individual therapeutic programmes. All such activity takes place away from the home environment. It remains the responsibility of placing authorities who purchase a therapeutic package for a young person to ensure it is appropriate to meet their individual needs.

Summary

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

The organisation, management and monitoring of the home are all outstanding. The home has a highly motivated manager and staff team who work collectively to promote the welfare and outcomes of young people.

Young people feel safe living at the home, speaking positively about the staff and their placement. The ethos and working practices of the home are designed to meet the needs of young people by creating a stable and supportive environment. The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding throughout the standards inspected.

No major issues or concerns were raised by either staff or young people. No actions have been raised as a result of the inspection. Two good practice recommendations have been made, linked to the depth of evidence held on site showing the range of recruitment procedures taking place and the written development plan.

The home has made significant progress in a number of areas since the previous inspection. For example, there has been progress in relation to the detailed planning documentation and risk assessments that have been put into place. The overall quality rating for the home has been raised from good to outstanding.

The overall quality rating is outstanding.

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

Improvements since the last inspection

At the previous inspection one recommendation was made linked to improving the detail contained in placement plans regarding young people's cultural, religious and racial needs. This has been addressed positively with planning documentation providing a greater depth and coverage of these areas.

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is outstanding.

The arrangements to promote the health needs of young people are outstanding. Excellent links have been established with local medical providers, such as doctors, dentist and the nurse

responsible for looked after children. The manager and staff are aware of how to access more specialist medical input if needed. Records are in place documenting all visits to doctors, dentist and opticians.

Significant improvements to the format and quality of health plans has taken place. Plans contain more detail, are comprehensive and well laid out, covering a range of areas associated with a young person's health needs, for example, medical requirements, health history and promotion of health. Plans are updated regularly with evidence showing they have been agreed by staff, the young person and their social worker. Plans are used as working documents and provide an excellent insight into all aspects of a young person's health care.

Staff are trained in first aid, medication awareness and food hygiene as part of the ongoing, core staff training programme. They also receive attachment training which covers areas, such as child development, traumatic interrupters, managing challenging behaviours and mental health.

Appropriate arrangements are in place to store and administer prescribed and non-prescribed medication. This is underpinned with comprehensive systems to record the administering of medication which are up to date and kept properly.

Young people confirm they are consulted about food and can make choices. Records of likes and dislikes are completed. All food consumed is recorded in food diaries, which are kept for each young person. Meals are treated as social occasions where young people and staff sit together to eat their meals. No issues regarding the quantity, quality and choice of food were raised.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is outstanding.

Privacy is not an issue of concern to young people. Bedrooms are single occupancy and young people confirm they have free access to their own bedroom. All sensitive information is stored securely in the staff office.

Young people understand how to access the complaints system, with written information provided in the young person's guide, along with information from their own placing authority. The contact details of external agencies are displayed around the home. Appropriate records of any complaint are kept. The home buys in the services of an independent advocacy agency, with a representative visiting each month.

The safety and rights of both staff and young people are protected. The home has developed excellent links with external agencies charged with safeguarding duties from both the public and voluntary sector. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and understood by staff who recognise their own responsibilities around safeguarding matters. All staff have received appropriate training and any safeguarding issues that have arisen have been referred immediately to the appropriate external agency.

Good procedures to address bullying are in place and young people have information provided for them in the young person's guide, as well as other information being displayed around the home. Staff are sensitive to the needs of young people, aware of their potential to bully or be bullied. Comprehensive risk assessments are in place to help with this, along with any coping

strategies, if required. Currently, staff and young people confirm that bullying is not a live issue in the home and the ethos and working practices adopted by staff make it an environment of zero tolerance regarding bullying matters.

The home suffered an unsettled period around the turn of the year and this is reflected in the number of incidents of young people missing without authority at that time. During this period, staff worked hard to keep safe young people who were putting themselves at risk. Staff have well thought out working practices, implemented with consistency, and coupled with strong links with external agencies that have helped them to respond positively and quickly to the needs of young people. The manager has played a leading role in developing protocols for dealing with missing young people with the local police and a strong working partnership has been developed.

The ethos and working practices of the home are aimed at working constructively and positively with young people, who may at times be rejecting of the boundaries put in place for them. The comprehensive planning documentation, risk assessments and strategies, assist in the creation of a positive, non-punitive environment that allows young people to work safely through any issues they may have. This is underpinned in the low number of sanctions and physical interventions that have taken place since the previous inspection. All staff have been trained in appropriate positive handling techniques.

Currently the home is stable, with no serious incidents taking place or young people missing without authority having taken place for some months. Staff have worked hard to come through a challenging period positively, which is a reflection of their commitment and consistency. The home is stable and young people have no issues or concerns about being and feeling safe, confirming the home is a safe place to live.

General health and safety issues are addressed with a range of risk assessments identifying hazards both in and outside the home. Risk assessments are reviewed and updated regularly. Each young person has a comprehensive, detailed risk assessment completed to an outstanding standard. For example, one covers 28 separate areas, with each area completed thoroughly. Assessments are regularly updated, with young people signing, along with their social worker and staff, to show they have read and agree with the contents. Appropriate arrangements to deal with fire safety along with service contracts for fire, gas and electrical equipment are in place.

All staff receive appropriate checks and clearances before they commence their duties at the home. There is a policy, underpinned in practice to re-check staff every three years and this is viewed as good practice. Recruitment procedures are comprehensive and meet with current requirements and recognised good practice. Whilst personal staff files containing the main body of evidence for recruitment procedures are held centrally, secondary evidence is held on-site that shows that regulatory requirements are being met. However, this secondary evidence is not comprehensive and misses some areas of good practice, for example, evidence showing that interviews are taking place.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is outstanding.

The individual support provided to young people is outstanding. This is recognised by young people who speak positively about the support they receive from staff. Comprehensive planning

documentation, individual risk assessments, daily observation records and records of key worker sessions provide evidence that supports this judgement.

The home has an excellent history of getting young people into full-time education at local schools, with good levels of attendance. Comprehensive education plans, supplemented by personal education plans compiled by the placing authority, are in place. Young people speak positively about their educational experiences and are fully engaged with their own education. For example, they were observed completing their homework on return from school.

Young people's individual needs, interests and choices drive the range of leisure activities taking place. Young people are encouraged to participate fully in community based activities. For example, the cinema and snow boarding are popular. Young people speak positively about the choice and range of activities, using a recent trip to the zoo as an example.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is outstanding.

A lot of work to improve the depth and quality of placement plans has taken place since the previous inspection. A range of documentation that identifies individual need, coupled with plans and strategies to meet those needs, make up the placement plan document. These are updated regularly, with each section signed and dated by the young person, their social worker and staff to show they have read and agree with the contents. As well as the expected sections, others have been added to cover all aspects of a young person's history, identity, development and needs, for example, living plans that map daily routine and the identification and recognition of religious, cultural and racial needs. The production and implementation of the placement plan document, along with its practical use, is deemed as outstanding practice.

Statutory reviews are taking place regularly within the required timescale. Young people speak positively about the consultation process, the support received by staff and their participation at their own review. Minutes from previous reviews are kept on a young person's file, with placement plans updated accordingly following each review.

The contact arrangements for some young people can be limited and complex. Specific contact plans are contained in a section of the placement plan, along with records of all contact maintained. Young people understand their own arrangements, including the reasons if contact is limited. Regular, monthly visits to the home by an independent advocate ensure all young people have regular access to someone other than staff or their social worker.

The admission and discharge procedures are well practiced and young people speak positively about how they were received when first admitted. Staff understand the procedures which are woven into the working practices of the home, recognising the difficulties young people face when being admitted or about to leave.

There are excellent systems in place that allow for meaningful consultation to take place. For example, young people's meetings take place regularly, with minutes from each meeting produced. The ethos and working practices adopted by the home identify times, such as meals and being in the car with young people, for staff to stimulate conversation and establish young people's views. Young people have no issues or concerns regarding the levels of consultation that are both formal and informal. Staff and young people were observed as being at ease and relaxed in each other's company with good levels of ongoing communication.

Achieving economic wellbeing

The provision is good.

Currently, no young people are in the position of being prepared to leave care. However, staff understand their own and the leaving care team's role in the process, having had recent experiences of preparing young people to leave care. Developing independence skills starts from admission, with young people supported and encouraged to develop these skills.

The home is located in a quiet residential area, with good access to community facilities, schools and transport links. The exterior of the home shows no sign it is a children's homes, blending in well with the environment. The general state of repair, fixtures, fittings, furnishings, décor and equipment are good.

Improvements to the main lounge and the communal area located outside bedrooms has taken place, with young people making specific choices about décor. Bedrooms are personalised to reflect the taste and interests of the occupier. Young people say they like living at the home and were observed as being comfortable and relaxed in their environment.

Organisation

The organisation is outstanding.

Both the Statement of Purpose and guide to the home for young people meet with regulatory requirement. They are reviewed and updated regularly. Young people confirm they received a copy of the guide when they first arrived at the home.

The promotion of equality and diversity is outstanding. As well as the planning documentation that provides excellent recognition of individual needs, the home's ethos and working practices are designed to promote positively equality and diversity issues. For example, young people are looked after by a diverse group of staff, many of them having completed specific equality and diversity training. There are ongoing projects to support this, such as the home having two staff nominated as equality and diversity champions tasked with linking the home into local cultural events. A file is kept, with separate sections for each young person that evidences their experiences or participation in any event.

The staff group is stable, having had little changeover recently. The group of staff are a highly motivated, experienced group who work together with a team-centred approach. They buy in and contribute positively to the ethos and working practices of the home that have developed steadily over recent years. They are well supported by the manager, with supervision, appraisals and team meetings taking place regularly.

Receiving new and updated training is given priority, with staff encouraged to participate fully with the range of training events on offer. They confirm they have good access to training and are supported to attend. They are an experienced, well-trained group, with all but the newest staff member having completed appropriate National Vocational Qualification training.

The organisation and management of the home is outstanding by a manager who is qualified, experienced and committed to providing an environment that meets the needs of young people. She has a clear sense of direction and constantly looks at ways to improve. She is well supported by a team of staff that are loyal and share the same ethos regarding the home's operation. All

administrative tasks are completed consistently and up to date, apart from an outdated development plan which is currently being revised.

Both the internal and external monitoring of the home takes place consistently within the required timescale. Reports produced monthly are comprehensive and contain strong elements of quality assurance with areas identified for improvement. The external monitoring reports begin with a section aimed specifically at informing young people about the findings from the visit. This is viewed as good practice.

Young people's files are structured, neat, up to date and kept properly, reflecting the five Every Child Matters outcomes.

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 Children's 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):

- look to expand the range of evidence held on site to reflect the fullness of the recruitment procedures taking place (NMS 27.1)
- ensure the written development plan for the home is updated. (NMS 33.5)